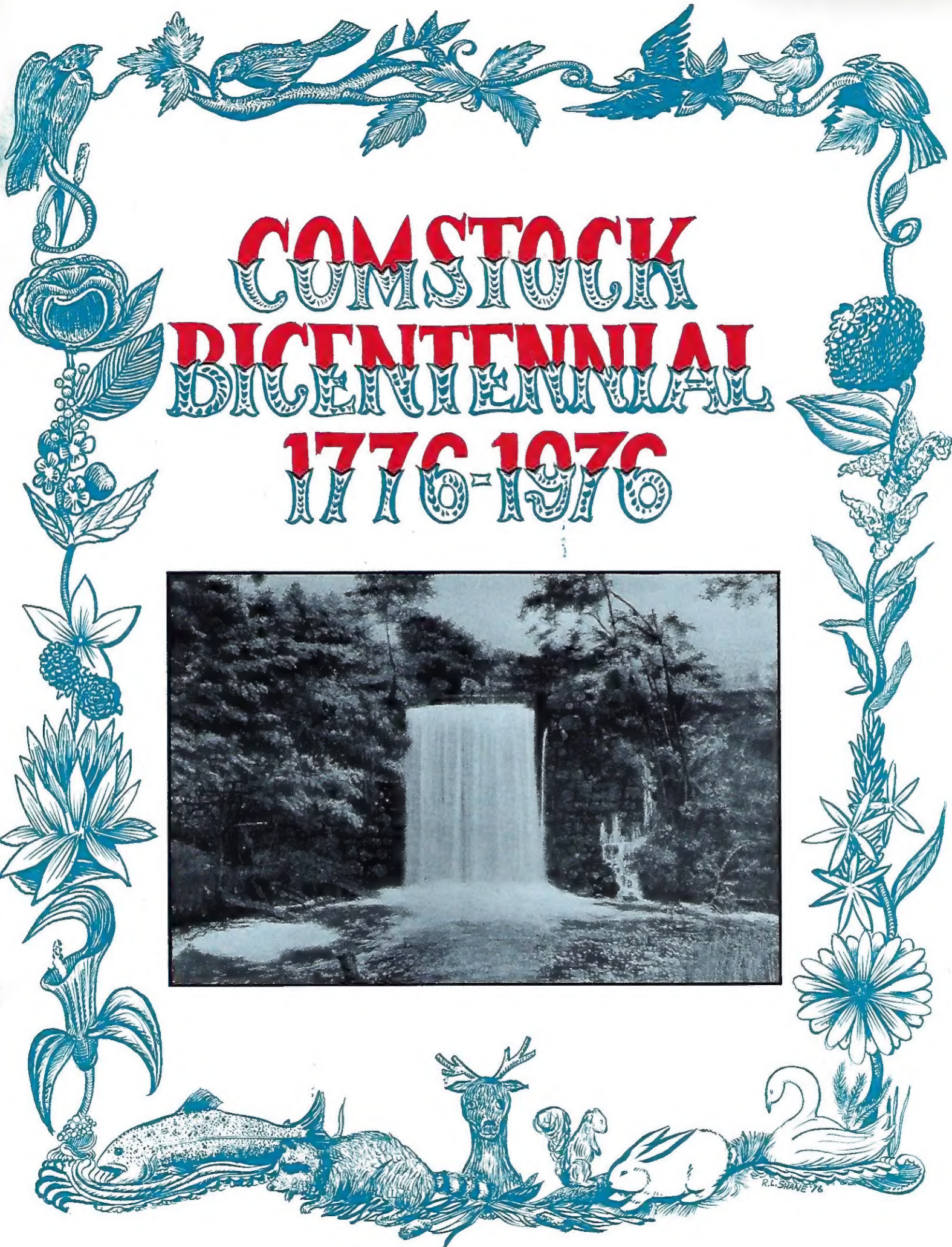
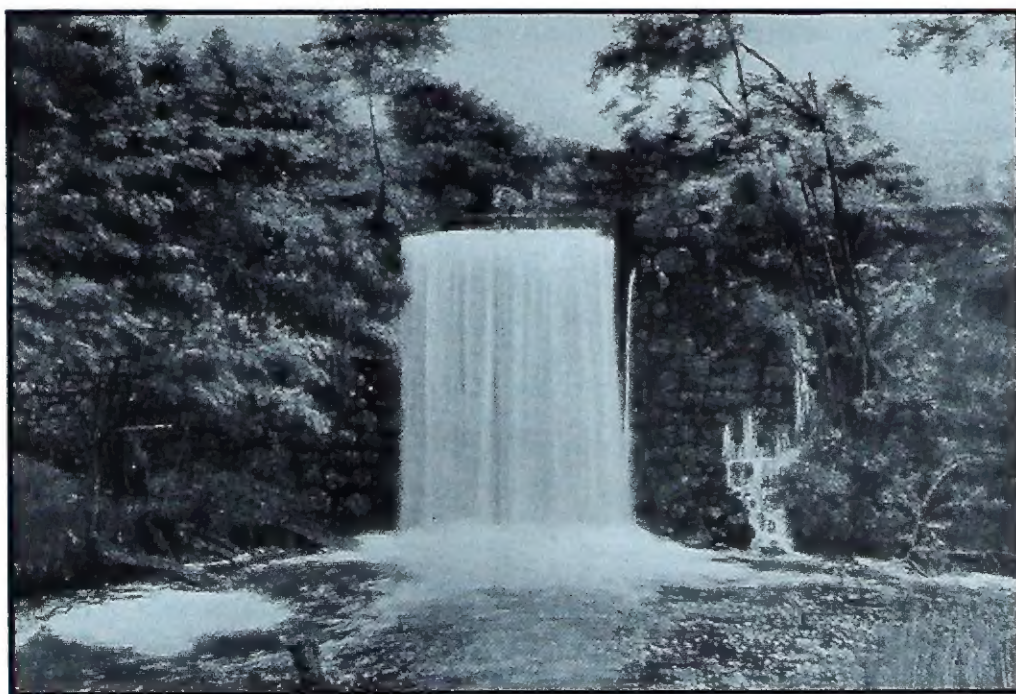
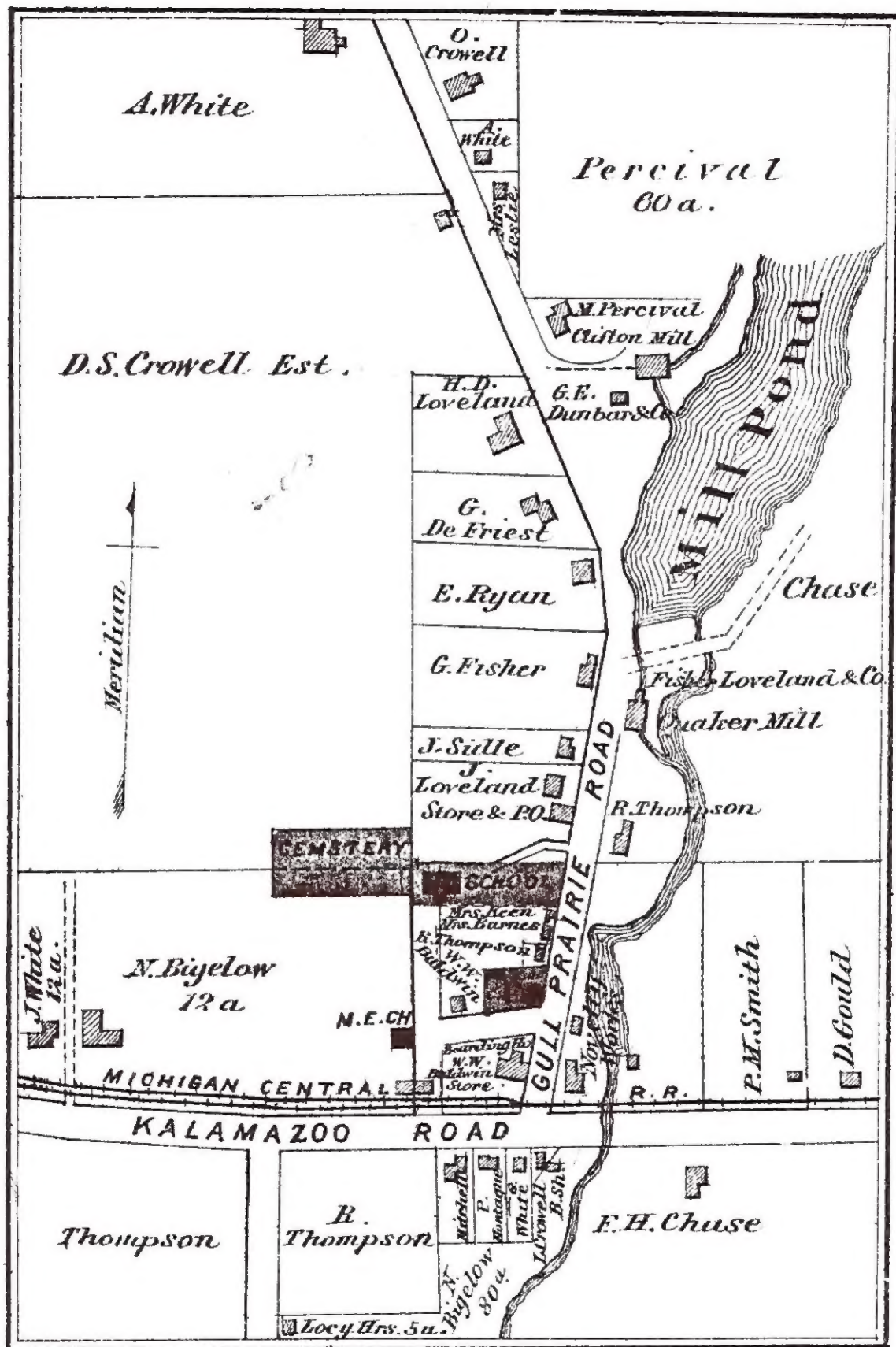


COMSTOCK
CUMSTOCK
BICENTENNIAL
BICENTENNIAL
1776-1976
1776-1976





The village of Comstock in 1873

**COMSTOCK
BICENTENNIAL
1776-1976**



Loading celery at Comstock.



Kalamazoo River just east of the River Street Bridge. Looking north to George Gates in 1911.



First pond, looking north from Peer Park in 1913.



Chris Nelson celery farm on Market St. looking north. Photo in the early 20's



The Fry house on Comstock Ave. Building date is thought to be earlier than the 1850 known date.



Mother Nelson in back yard, & her chickens.

PREFACE

We have attempted to bring you some of the history, happenings, people and life in our township, beginning with the time just before our founding to the present.

The articles and pictures herein were made possible by the generous people and alumni of the community and through the hard and tedious labors of the unselfish, devoted few.

This book is dedicated to each of us, you and me, for all have contributed.

Ye Reap That Which Ye Sow!

Bi-Centennial Committee



Scene of Gull Prairie Road (N. 26th St.) crossing. (From left to right) Baldwin building, stable, Odd Fellows Hall and

Mason house, about 1900. This is part of the same area as shown on map, opposite.

CREDITS

Material for articles used in this book was accumulated and prepared by:

Covers – Robert Shane, Committee
Early History and Government – Charles &
Donna Chrisman, Joe Van Bruggen, Olive
Vose
Cemeteries – Donna Chrisman
Dutch Settlers – Chris Wenke, Russell Wood
Fire Department – Bert Lisk
Library – Maude Ellwood
Schools – Nancy Deal, Karla Reed, Donna
Chrisman
Post Office – Carol Doud
Churches – Olive Vose, Ray Slager
Parks – Fred McLinden
Clubs & Organizations – Olive Vose
Doctors – Olive Vose
Manufacturing – Charles Chrisman
Did you know – Committee

As Well as assisting in research, the following coordinating committee did final editing and composing of material and pictures for this book:

C. Dale and Karla Reed
Charles and Donna Chrisman
Olive Vose
James and Margaret Bell

Some of the more frequent, interested and dedicated people on the Bi-Centennial Committee who aided and abetted our cause, as well as members above, included:

Glenn Baughan
Mary Jo Breneman
Virginia Churchill
Felix and Connie Osorno
Joyce Van Bruggen
Eleanor Westrate

Much appreciation and many thanks go to the numerous citizens and businesses for their valued financial and moral support to the Bi-Centennial effort. As this writing is far in advance of completion of all our planned festivities, including this book, more detailed credits will be published in a later issue of the Comstock Newsletter.

EARLY HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

The Township of Comstock was first surveyed in January, 1827, by Robert N. Clark, Jr., and organized as a township in 1834. It lies on both sides of the Kalamazoo river, which meanders through nearly the center of the township, with here and there a bend to the southward.

The first settler in the town was William Tolland, who came to the prairie in the fall of 1829, but while that beautiful and fertile spot has ever since been called his prairie, it does not appear that he ever acquired title to a rod of it, though he lived there several years. Early in the following year, Nathaniel Mathews, Ralph Tuttle, Sherman Cummings, George Townsend, Caleb Eldred, Samuel Percival, Lovell and Hiram Moor, Leland Lane, Linus Ellison and William Harris arrived. Land was taken up in 1830 by Mr. Harris and by a Major G. Van Dwyer, the latter entering the west half of the southwest quarter of section 13, and the former taking up the same description upon section 17. In 1831, entries of land were made by Horace H. Comstock (very extensively), Caleb Eldred, T.W. Merrill, Mumford Eldred, Stephen Eldred, Leland Lane, and others. Mr. Lane settled on what is now known as the Dillenbeck farm. Horace H. Comstock, Caleb Eldred, Samuel Percival and others settled where the village of Comstock stands. Roswell Ransom and Cyrus Lovell were among those who came in 1831. William Earl came in 1832. In 1833, Seaman, Bristol, Charles Galligan, Lyman Tubbs, George Wheeler, Hugh Shafter, and Ezra Rice arrived.



Aunt Fanny Locy's home was located on River Street just north of the present King Highway.

The first birth in the township was that of Elizabeth, daughter of Roswell Ransom, Esq., born on Tolland's prairie, on the 2nd of December, A.D., 1832. The first marriage was in the summer of 1833, the parties of which were Charles Whitcomb and Catherine Earl, the ceremony being performed by the Rev. Thomas W. Merrill, the pioneer Baptist missionary of Kalamazoo County. The first religious meetings were held at the house of Caleb Eldred in Comstock village in 1831; subsequently, meetings were held in the fall of 1833 at the house of Lovell Moore. The first death was that of Ethan Bradley, who died in the fall of 1836.

Previous to the organization of the township pursuant to the act of the Territorial Legislature, it has been, since 1830, included within the limits of the township of Arcadia, then embracing the whole of the north half of the county. In 1830 Horace H. Comstock, Caleb Eldred and Samuel Percival settled at the junction of Comstock creek with the Kalamazoo river, and endeavored to make at that point a village and place of importance. Here one of the very first saw mills in this county was built and put into operation in 1831 by Caleb Eldred; and, soon afterwards, Mr. Comstock and Mr. Samuel Percival built a grist mill nearby, supplying a need which the settlers in this section were beginning sorely to feel. In the first pages of the history of Kalamazoo will be found the record of a township meeting, and in the list of officers chosen will be found the names of several of



TAVERN, COMSTOCK LANDMARK, BEING TORN DOWN

Wreckers are tearing down the landmark where early Southwestern Michigan settlers warmed up to the job of making homes in a new territory. More than a century ago it was the tavern at Comstock where travellers hitched their horses and stopped for the night. —Gazette Photo.

the Comstock settlers.

The village on the creek enjoyed quite a lively trade for a while. It consisted of a general store, tavern, and hotel, known later as the Baldwin House, and Montague Store.

There were three or four grist mills and a saw mill. It had first class men to start it, no better could be found in any early settlement, but losing the county seat soon curtailed the rapid growth.

Few villages have had more active, liberal and devoted patrons, more munificent founders, than was Horace H. Comstock to the village of his name. Mr. Comstock first came here in 1831, made large purchases of land, and returned to his home in Cooperstown, N.Y. He was engaged in the Detroit and Chicago trade (Indian and traders' and military supplies, etc.), and while on the way from the East, in 1832, he was attacked in Detroit with cholera. However, he recovered after a very severe illness and came again to Comstock. He seems to have been determined from the first to have his place made the county seat, though he was aware that it had already been established at "Bronson." To this end he directed every effort, devoting to that project his abilities and no small amount of his considerable wealth. One of the first things he did was to make a point against Bronson village by making it appear that the river was navigable to his place for large boats. The next season he brought a stock of goods to Comstock, and established the first store in the town. The same year he erected a school house at his own expense, simply asking in return that the people should call the village and township "Comstock," a name which had already become attached to the village by popular consent; and, really, the prospects of the little town in that year were quite auspicious. In April 1833, the second "legal" annual meeting in the wide township of Arcadia was held at the house of Caleb Eldred. In several ways "Comstock" was a formidable rival to "Bronson" and there is little doubt but that had the latter place remained under the exclusive control of Titus Bronson a few years longer, the untiring energy and influence of Mr. Comstock would have secured, for a time at least, a very prominent position for his village and township. Mr. Comstock enjoyed a very fair trade with the settlers in the surrounding country, who made the little village quite lively by their frequent calls for lumber, store supplies, and with grists to grind. He erected a very fine residence there with handsome grounds, which gave the place an air of refinement that left a pleasant impression of the whole place upon the beholder. Mr. Comstock also found time for a great deal of land speculation in Kalamazoo and other towns. In 1835 he was elected to the Legislative

Council, being the first Senator from this county, and it was he, who, at the organization of the township of Cooper, gave it that name in memory of his wife, who was a niece and bore the name of the great novelist, author of the "Leatherstocking Tales."

But the effort to make the village of Comstock a larger town than Kalamazoo soon failed. The removal of the Land Offices to Kalamazoo in 1834, and the influx of strangers to attend the land sales; the influence and shrewdness of the proprietors of "Bronson," Messrs. Burdick, Sheldon & Lyon, and its natural advantages, gave this place a start which soon put all its rivals to rout. In 1838, we find Comstock described as a village and post office, pleasantly located on the north bank of the Kalamazoo river, with a flour mill, two saw mills, a store, physician and two lawyers. The physician was Dr. King, who came to this place from Oxford, Canada, in 1834, and took up considerable land in the township. The "Marshall and Allegan Railroad" was located (on paper) through the village about that time, but the hopes it raised were never realized. In 1837, Mr. Comstock bought a one-quarter interest in the plat of the village of Kalamazoo, from Justus Burdick, paying for the same \$17,000. In 1844, he moved to Kalamazoo, and in 1845 purchased of Col. Edwards the property now owned and occupied by Stephen S. Cobb, Esq., and which that gentleman has so greatly beautified. In February, 1846, Mrs. Comstock, a most estimable woman, died (while at her tea table apparently in good health); and not long after, Mr. Comstock disappears from the scenes of our history; and but for a few years since, saw the law of earth, far away from the fields of his ambition, his hopes and his projects.

The first meeting of the electors of the township of Comstock, after being set off from Arcadia Township, was at the house of James Burnett, on the 7th day of April 1834. The township at that time embracing "all that part of Kalamazoo County comprised of the northeast one-quarter of said county." At this meeting, Lovell Moore was chosen Moderator, and Leland Lane, Clerk. The following officers were elected: Supervisor, William Earl; Assessors, Charles W. Spaulding, Daniel O. Dodge, Edwin M. Clapp; Clerk and Collector, Leland Lane; Highway Commissioners, C.W. Spaulding, Charles Andrews, George Townsend; and a Constable, E.A. Jackson; School Commissioners, Stephen Eldred, Sherman Cummings, Samuel Percival; Directors of the Poor (an office that must have been a sinecure in those days), Jabez Rodgers, James Burnett; School Inspectors, Daniel O. Dodge, Thomas W. Merrill, C.W. Andrews, Lovell Moore, and Leland Lane. For Overseers of Highways and Fence Viewers, six members were elected. The compensation voted to these last named officers was

75 cents for each day while employed in the discharge of their official duties. Leland Lane Ralph Tuttle, and Stephen Eldred were clothed with the dignity attached to the position of pound-master, though there seems to have been no pound or appropriation for one. It was also voted at this meeting "that all fences in this township shall be five feet high, and sufficiently tight to stop hogs weighing 20 pounds."

The first bridge built over the Kalamazoo river was the lower bridge (35th Street), so-called, below Galesburg. It was built on the 4th day of July, 1834, the timbers of which were elm logs cut upon the banks of the river above, hauled to the river and floated down. It was a concerted affair; or as it was then termed, "a bridge-building bee," to which all the yeomanry of the town had been invited to attend. The call was very liberally responded to, and a merrier and more memorable celebration of our National birthday, never since occurred in the township. Men came with teams, axes, ropes and other needed articles. While many worked upon the land, others stripped off clothing and worked in the water catching the logs as they came down; and, notching the ends, then lifting them into place, the piers being formed by cribs of logs. The work was so far completed that day that a few men could finish it speedily. The "creature comforts" were by no means wanting on this occasion, every comer bringing his basket contributions to the general stock. The upper bridge was built in 1836 below Inman's Restaurant.

Approximately in the year 1836, Mr. George L. Gale, an erratic genius, with some money and much assurance, purchased considerable land in Galesburg and proceeded to lay out the "city" to which he affixes his name. In 1839, he came to Kalamazoo and practiced law for a time; then he went to Paw Paw. Mr. Gale left Paw Paw for California about the time so many from Michigan went thither.

The following are among the early mechanics of what is now Galesburg: Samuel Wilkerson, Blacksmith; S. Bliss, carpenter; Springstead, shoemaker; Charles L. Keith, wagon maker; R. Blackett, tailor. Dr. Ezra Stetson was one of the early physicians; Philip Gray built the first tavern in 1835, and was landlord of the same. The first store in Galesburg was opened in the summer of 1837 by this same Mr. Gray. He seems to have been an extensive dealer, with a touch of the sensational in his nature — for it was his wont to purchase a whole wagon-load of goods at one time. When they came, he would put out a bulletin in front of his little store with these words: "This store will be closed for three days to enable the proprietor to mark and arrange his very large stock of new goods!"

On the farm of Mr. James Hopkins, near the

present Hydreco Plant, stood an Indian Village. In the midst of it grew an immense apple tree, still thrifty and bearing an unfailing crop of really choice fruit for a number of years after the first settlers came; but the Indians destroyed it before they were moved West. It was from this village on the edge of the prairie that, many and many a year ago, the incident occurred that gave the beautiful name to our river. We have not space for the tradition in full, but the point of it is, that a wager was made that an Indian could not run to a certain place upon the river bank and return before the water, then boiling in a little kettle upon the fire, should have boiled away. The race was successfully accomplished, after a great many trials by the fleetest runners in the tribe, and hence the name commemorating the event, Ke-Kalamazoo, "The Boiling Pot," or, "where water boils in the pot."

In the great crisis of our nation's fate, the town of Comstock was true to the last requirements of patriotism. The first call for troops found her brave sons ready and responsive, exchanging the pleasures and comforts of home for the perilous scenes of the battle field, the hardships of the weary march and the discomforts of the bivouac; the pains of the hospitals, the horrors of rebel prisons, and all the evils of grim-visaged War. The last rallying cry in the gloomy winter of 1864 found the yeomanry of the town undaunted and as determined as ever to flock to the standard of the Union, while the aid societies were ever busy in their work of providing comforts for the soldier. Under the various calls, Comstock contributed nearly two hundred and fifty men to the armies of the Union. (This material taken from the book written by James M. Thomas, Stone Bros. Book and Job Printers — 1869.)

On one of the settler's land in the 1850's, thirty different kinds of trees were counted — then added to this, the profuse growth of wild fruit trees and berry bushes, from wild plum to the strawberry and you have a picture of what it was like in the early 1830's.

One of the first men to settle one mile west of the "creek" on old Territorial Road, also played an important part in Comstock's early history. His name was Eli Anderson, and his father was John Anderson of Revolutionary War fame. Eli was well known as a great hunter, trapper, and fisherman. It took nearly five months in coming by ox cart with his family from Gaines, New York. He was the first justice of the peace, an office which he held for 42 years. Mr. Anderson was a delegate to Jackson, Michigan, when the Republican Party was first organized. Many of his descendants have been prominent residents of this area. Charles Anderson now resides on the

remaining part of the "old homestead" near the Rex mill.

Another family of pioneers was the Comings who settled and built the large brick house across from the Hydreco plant on East Michigan Avenue (old Territorial Road). It has been said that they were very prominent farmers. Mr. Comings was also a politician and known to have developed a "Brick Yard Factory" behind the big house where the bricks were made to build their own ten bedroom home, plus many of the finer brick homes in Galesburg. This house still stands today and remains a monument to the good craftsmanship of that time.



The Comings home as it is today. It was located on Territorial Road and is across from Hydreco.

Another early pioneer to take advantage of the opportunities of this area, was Phillip Goodrich, who in 1841, moved here and reclaimed a large portion of heavy timbered lands on the northwest quarter of section 32. He conceived the idea of converting the ashes from burned log heaps, which were plentiful all over the township, into "pearlash" and finally into saleratus which was used in the manufacture of glass, soap, and baking soda. This proved so lucrative that in buying ashes from various parts of the county, he was able to purchase larger tracks of lands. In later years, he became a lover of horses and operated the "Galesburg Driving Park" until his death.

At **BALDWIN'S**

You will find **EVERYTHING** in

**Canned Goods,
Flour, Feed,
Dry Goods,
Notions, Groceries,
Hardware, Etc.**

And by the way, **HAVE** you tried our Canned Goods?

We have a splendid line of
All Sorts of Fruits, Jellies and Dried Fruits.

We keep the Celebrated "**Blossom Brand**" of Canned Goods.
We sell loads of it, but if you want the top notch
of excellence, we have it.

IT'S THE NONE SUCH.

Oh! yes, we nearly forgot! We keep
**Boots, Shoes and Rubber Goods,
and all kinds of School Stationery.**

W. W. BALDWIN,
COMSTOCK, MICH.

Typical ad for 'everything' it seems at the Baldwin general store.

Many names of early pioneers such as Henry Vose, Samuel Percival, Botsfords, Montagues, Beckwith and Elwoods, and many more too numerous to mention, left a beautiful heritage. Those of us who can trace our geneology back to those early pioneers can be justly proud.



One of the pioneer homes is the residence of Maude Elwood located on East ML Ave. (About 1905)



The Ranney home was the residence of an early pioneer family – (Maurice Ranney). It is now the home of the AMVETS –

Politics has always had its day in the township. Early records show that it had strong Democratic proclivities. In 1835, it gave the "Boy Democratic Governor" 96 votes to 1 vote for the Whig candidate. Actually, there were more Whigs than Democrats at this time until about 1837 when the Whigs (later the Republican party) had their political victory in electing Lyman Tubbs (Supervisor of Comstock). A barrel of whiskey was said to have influenced a few votes that day and from that time to this day the Republican party has held on in this township.

It was in the area of the old county farm (now Rjver Oaks Park) that the newly arrived pioneers were introduced to an Indian sugar making "bee" for the first time. The Indian men were playing the part of the "drones" and the squaws were busy gathering sap from the trees and toting it to the camp. This sap was poured into iron kettles supported by stakes driven into the ground with a fire blazing underneath. The fresh sap was poured into the first kettle, while the sap from the first kettle was poured into the second one and so on, until about four kettles were in use for sugaring off. Many times rabbits, squirrels and chipmunks were cooked in the sap to feed their lazy husbands.

The Indians did not make their sugar into cakes, but poured the sugar mass to cool in rough half-bushel "mococks" made of birch bark sewed up with thongs made of slippery elm bark. The Indians used this sugar to bargain for bread, tobacco, or any other article they wanted.

There are many tales of extreme hardship endured by our early pioneers, such as lost children, encounters with wolves, and the extreme cold winters which they found in this area.

In July, 1931, the township was in great financial trouble. Five thousand dollars was borrowed from the Galesburg State Bank to carry on the finances of the

township. Also many offices were vacant as a result of Galesburg becoming a city on September 21, 1931.

Now, 1976 being an election year, something should be said about politics in Comstock. In 1932, there were only three voting precincts. Now there are six. The polls are open from 7:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M., where previously it was 8:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M.

On August 24, 1934, an observation was made in the amount of traffic that passed over the Kalamazoo river bridge in Comstock. Following is the result of this observation!

Pleasure Cars	592
Light Trucks	339
Heavy Trucks	124
Pedestrians	445
Motorcycles	3
Bikes	92
Baby Cabs	3
Horse Drawn Vehicles	2
Trailers	12
Passengers in Cars	3,095

On September 4, 1934, the bridge across the river in Comstock was declared inadequate and dangerous for vehicles and pedestrians. Therefore, the township board requested the State Highway Commissioner to use his influence to procure from the Federal Government sufficient funds to build a new bridge over the river.

On June 23, 1957, the flooded river conditions were so bad that Thomas Schrier, M.D., suggested that the river area of Comstock township be posted notifying residents of danger of disease due to flooded river conditions. The warning was to boil all water.

On December 29, 1937, the township treasurer became a permanent and regular member of the township board.

In the beginning of the year 1940 the Library Branch of the township requested \$200.00 for the maintenance of the library. This amount increased year after year as the library expanded. Today the budget is approximately \$41,000. In May, 1955, a new library building was approved by vote and bids were taken for the construction of a new building.

A contract with Consumers Power Company for all night street lighting was made July 1, 1941. The cost then was \$21.83 per month. Today, the township pays \$38,000 per year for street lighting.

Also at this time, a petition was filed with the township for some additional sort of fire protection for residents. Bids were taken in November, 1941, and a 500 gallon pumper was purchased. Plans were made for a regular fire station in 1943.

In April 1943, a motion was made that the township employ a CPA (Certified Public Accountant) to

audit the financial records of the township annually.

On June 4, 1945, the board voted to hire a fulltime police officer. He would furnish his own uniform, car, and pay all operating expenses. If this was requested of police today, we probably wouldn't have enough to go around.

A petition was received November 25, 1945, containing 25 signatures in favor of erecting a new Town Hall for the public's use.

Voters were in favor and \$67,000 was raised for this purpose. The building was completed in 1951 on Comstock Avenue.

On April 2, 1951, it was decided by the board to have a cleanup week in the township. Trucks would tour the township and pick up rubbish and refuse. It was also decided that the entire campaign should not exceed the cost of \$200. Today we have one of the most modern trash and rubbish compactors anywhere within the State for Comstock residents use. The cost of this operation to the township is about \$20,000 a year. We still continue an annual cleanup and roadside pickup at an additional cost of about \$2,500 a year.



Comstock compactor, a real benefit to the community.

This township was one of the pioneers in the State in appointing a zoning board of three men in 1946. Their duty was to study the growth of the community up to this time and to set up a map showing where future residential and industrial expansion should be allowed in compatible areas so it would be a model township and one to be proud of. This Board has since been increased to seven people who have spent many hours with the help of professional consultants to study the water, sewage, and land use problems that exist in a township such as ours.



River Street at Comstock Ave. looking north in 1918. (note the interurban tracks on the left)

At the present time, we have a road program that we can be proud of. All the local streets will be black-topped by 1978, with practically no dust to bother anyone.

Comstock has a law enforcement department that consists of four cruisers and eight men that serve this area. This is financed partly from direct taxation, plus help from the revenue sharing money. These men work under the supervision of the County Sheriff.

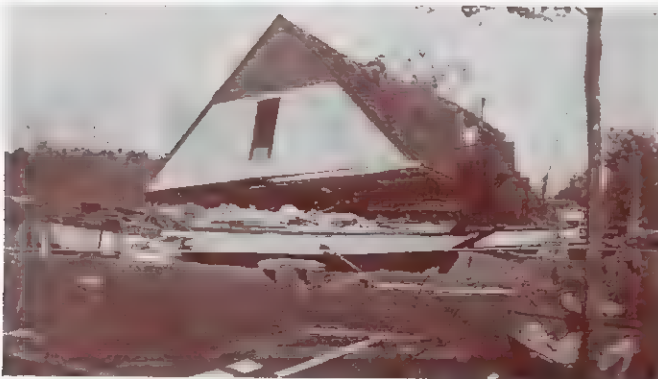


Comstock Township Hall on King Highway.

Comstock Township has progressed very rapidly in the last thirty years due to the fact it has had very good men and women in its public offices.

It has a number of firsts to its credit among many townships of larger size. It has had a good tax base to draw from, due to the rapid industrial growth, plus a large number of beautiful homes which have been built in the last two or three decades. Many services within the area, which will not be found in larger townships, have been offered to the people.

DID YOU KNOW?



Three of the many tornado damaged homes in South Comstock (Abbey St. area) that occurred Aug. 8, 1939. Virtually every home on River St., south of Lake St. in the Abbey and Francis Streets were demolished or damaged. This unhappy event attracted many sightseers from several out-of-state places. It was estimated several thousand of the "curious public" passed through the area.

DID YOU KNOW?

Do you sometimes feel as if you don't get enough paid time off of work for vacation, or sick leave; and if you do, you feel as if you're not paid enough for it? Well, in 1944 the fire chief was allowed one week for vacation and one week for sick leave at the rate of 50¢ per hour.



For you snowmobile enthusiast! Here's one you will not see too often. This masterpiece built in 1916 is being examined in front of Archie Peer's old brick store on old Michigan Ave.



Scene of a pleasurable boat excursion up and down the Kalamazoo River. These trips passed through the Comstock area to the Gates Park.

DID YOU KNOW?

For many years, there was a tunnel under the railroad tracks and U.S. 12 (Mich. Ave.). School children were required to use this from 8 in the morning until 4 in the afternoon.

DID YOU KNOW?

The first road was the old territorial road running midway through the township from east to west — dated March 7, 1836.

COMSTOCK CEMETERIES

COMSTOCK CEMETERY WAS BURYING PLACE FOR PASSING IMMIGRANT

By Worth C. Knowles

Kalamazoo Gazette June 1, 1930

Hilltop graveyard holds many unmarked graves, some known to be 100 years or more old.

High on the hilltop above the hamlet of Comstock and commanding a broad view of the Kalamazoo River valley and the city beyond lies one of the oldest cemeteries in Kalamazoo County, the Comstock Cemetery, a burying ground originated by immigrants who passing by on the old Territorial road between Detroit and Chicago, found a final resting place for the dead in this lofty haven.

Perhaps to them wearied after traveling miles through the valley and its upper reaches, this Comstock hilltop seemed nearer Heaven and perhaps they left their dead in this sequestered spot because it was a peaceful prominence in the then lonely landscape about; one that would survive despite whatever ravages the water might commit in the bottom lands below. In any event the burying place was originated when some members of the immigrant party passing through the Comstock region in or about 1830, were overtaken by disease or some of the other ills to which mortals are subject, and when the crisis came the Creator took his own and the heavily laden wagons of the west bound pioneers passed on, leaving behind their loved ones.

RUDE CROSSES USED

Not without markers were these early graves, though today no signs remain of these. Rude crosses were frequently and usually erected according to reports of old residents, who though not remembering the existence of markers were told about them by their forbears in earlier years. In 1830, or thereabouts, slabs of marble or granite were almost unknown in this section of the country and even though procurable were so costly and their transportation so difficult that few, if any, were erected before 1840 or later, they were not uncommon in the large cemeteries adjacent to the larger villages but were practically unheard of in the country graveyards.

However the oldest monument in the Comstock cemetery was probably erected in 1839 or soon after that date for the inscription on the mossy marble slab was: "ABI. wife of LELAND LANE, Died September 9, 1839 - Aged 37 years." Not earliest Burial.

MRS. LANE was not, however, the first to lie beneath the firs and pines of this quiet burial ground.

Proof that others were buried before has been offered by DAVID W. CLARK of Comstock, who cares for the cemetery as the sexton, JOHN SHERMAN, is unable to do the work. Clark recalls that his stepfather, STEPHEN B. LOVELAND, came to Comstock in 1832 and used to tell of burials in the hilltop graveyard during the first years of his arrival prior to the burial of MRS. LANE in 1839.

Immigrants found the cemetery desirable because they were permitted to bury their dead without charge and it seems not unlikely that a number of burials took place in the graveyard several years before 1832.

Because the early markers were of wood and rapidly rotted by the weather, and no record was made of early burial in the cemetery, there are probably many graves in the place whose existence and location are quite unknown. Workers in the Cemetery have in years gone by filled and graded many sunken spots, known by their appearance to have been graves. These were without markers and not of record. When they were made and filled no living person knows, but it is thought by Comstock folk that many of these were members of immigrant parties who passed through the region in the earliest years of the 19th century. Not infrequently cemetery workers digging new graves strike into these old and unmarked burials. There is no warning - no thudding of spades against rotted wood or solid oaken caskets. The pine coffins used in earlier years have completely disappeared and the diggers encounter at once the bones of those long buried. In such instances the new grave's location is not changed; the diggers pass by or through the remains of those buried before and another coffin is lowered into the resting place of one long since gone to dust. With present burial methods and the use of concrete grave vaults there is little or no possibility of such incidents occurring in the years beyond, cemetery officials say. Records, everlasting markers or monuments, and metal caskets with the grave vaults make such an occurrence most unlikely.

The cemetery contains many interesting tombstones. Among these is one erected to mark the final resting place of "Dr. Adam Thomson of Edinburgh, Scotland, died Sept. 9, 1862, Aged 74." This is near the front of the graveyard and is probably the grave of one of Comstock's early physicians though no facts were recalled or known about him by cemetery

officials.

Unusual Marker

Another monument bears a strange epitaph in the following: "What? Glendon Asahel? Yes. Died February 26, 1857; Age 3 years, son of A.G. and O.S. Hopkins." Why the marker was inscribed in the fashion indicated is unknown but it has always proven interesting, yet baffling problem to cemetery workers.

The graves of children are probably the most neglected by their surviving relatives, Comstock cemetery workers say. This, it is believed, is due to the fact that many families who lose young children in death move far from the spot in later years and are often in too remote a location to return for the purpose of decorating graves on Memorial Day or similar occasions.

INDIAN BURIAL PLACES

Hard by the waters edge on the banks of the Kalamazoo river, lying side by side were some 30 Indian Graves. This burial site was on section 27 on the farm of the late T.C. Ford.

When first discovered by settlers, there were not only the graves but in a small log inclosure was an Indian sitting, wrapped in his blanket just as he was placed at death. This was one mode of Indian burial.

Mr. H.D. Streater opened some of the graves and found silver and Copper broaches and rings. A tin or Copper pail was found in nearly every grave opened. Some trinkets had the word "Montreal" indicating

that they had traded with Canadians. Among the graves was one of an old French trapper at the head of which was a rude wooden cross.

On the banks of the river about a mile east of the graves, on the farm of Jesse Earl could be seen the foundation of an old trading post in 1880. In the rear were outlines of another building which might have been a fur station.

OTHER OLD BURIAL PLACES

The oldest burial ground was in the east part of the township where some of the early settlers were buried. This was in the S.E. Corner of section 24 on the north bank of the Kalamazoo River. The first buried were three children of Mr. Aldrich in 1833.

Miss Ann Sumner was buried in 1835. She died while teaching school at Comstock.

The only burial ground in Comstock owned by an organized company was the Galesburg Oak Grove Cemetery Association.

The first burial was A.J. Beckwith, son of Ezra Beckwith of Galesburg in 1875.

COMSTOCK CEMETERIES

Comstock Cemetery
Ford's Hill Cemetery
Galesburg Old Cemetery
Maple Grove Cemetery
Oak Grove Cemetery
Shafter Burying Ground Cemetery
Wheaton Burying Ground Cemetery
County Rest Home Cemetery

DID YOU KNOW?

The early settlers found here in Comstock Indians who dwelt in wigwams. The settlers were often compelled to "hut it" Pottowattomi style before their log house was finished.

One Indian being scantily clad during a cold winter day was asked if his arms were not cold. The Indian asked his white friend if his face was not cold. When the settler answered, "no," the Indian said, "Well, Indian face all over."

In 1832 three early settlers visited an Indian sugar bush. Large poles supported by stakes driven in the ground held a number of iron kettles. In one kettle the visitors observed strange objects bobbing up and down in the boiling sap. The objects were chipmunks, squirrels and an occasional woodchuck.

In June, Betsy, a two-year-old became lost in the Comstock swamps. Three men, fearing that the child might be harmed by wolves, built a fire and spent the night in the swamps. She was found in the morning alive and well.

In the spring of 1832 some people visited an Indian "sugar bush." The dusky matrons, taking the cold sap in their mouths would spurt it over ladles filled with hot sugar to cool it off. They presented it to their white visitors who declined to eat any of it.

Horace Comstock owned between 1300 and 1400 acres of Comstock township land between the years 1832 and 1835.

DUTCH SETTLERS

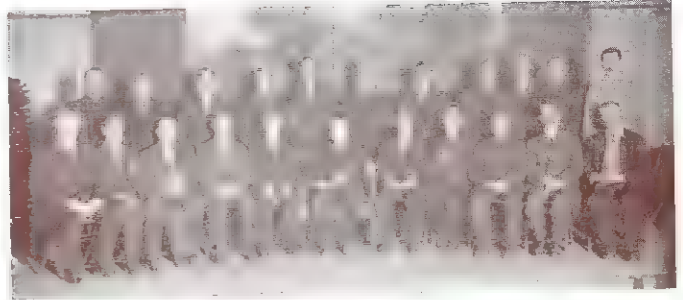
The Dutch settlers were associated with vegetable growing and the celery business. The early history of the celery industry in Kalamazoo and Comstock is a bit legendary and many claims have been made as to who deserves the honor of introducing the vegetables to Kalamazoo and consequently to Comstock. It is generally believed that a Scotsman by the name of George Taylor brought seeds from his native country and grew the first crop about 1856. Mr. Taylor's garden is thought to have been located on West Main Street in Kalamazoo. It is also thought that the first celery could have been grown fifteen to twenty years later in Comstock.

Regarding the first celery growers in Comstock it is impossible to determine who the first ones were. According to the Kalamazoo Gazette article concerning the birthday of Mr. William P. Slager, it appears that he was among the first but probably not the first. The article seems to indicate Mr. Salger joined others established in the growing of celery, about the year 1888.



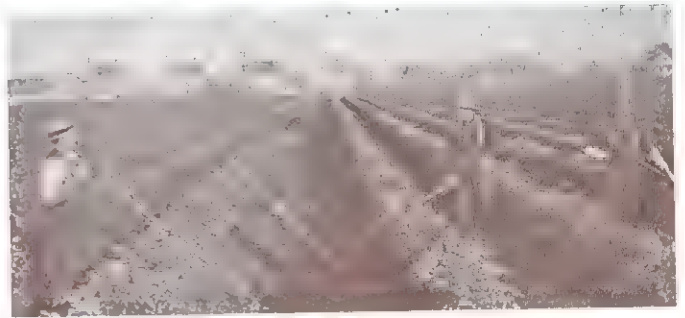
WILLIAM A. SLAGER

In talking to the grandsons and granddaughters of Mr. W.P. Slager, it seems that John Boyed and Mr. Stoutmeyer, father of John Stoutmeyer former Fire Chief, could have been among the first celery growers. This, however, cannot be definitely substantiated. The early photograph of celery growers indicates celery growing was in full swing about 1912 to 1914 when it was thought this picture was taken.



Celery growers in Comstock Township in 1914. Front Row: (L-R) Henry Ouding, Sr., Rufus Cramer, Ties Bogema, Richard Ouding, Sr. John P. Salger, W.W. Baldwin, John W. Slager, Christian Nelson, Egbert Tuinier, Jewett Pease, Benjamin Cramer. Back Row: (l-r) Peter Talma, Isaac Dey, Gene Hassig, Walter Cramer, Yelta Blue, William Boyed, Peinder Huizenga, Jacob Crainer, Frederick Coates, Harm Ouding, David Clark.

Celery growing flourished until the depression years when Mr. Hazelager started growing bedding and vegetable plants in 1933. His main crop was still celery but he increased his production of plants each year. Mr. Hazelager's farm was located at 5300 Market Street, Comstock. A son, who worked with his father, now operates the same type of industry in Alpharetta, Georgia. Mr. Herman Tunier now grows bedding plants on the former Hazelager farm.



Typical celery field.

Mr. Frank Bell came to Comstock in 1923 to begin his florist business on Comstock Ave. (then Lake Street). In 1924 he also started growing flats of vegetable and bedding plants for his local customers. Later in 1926 or '27 he grew also for the truckers, men who came from other towns or states to purchase flowers and plants for their business.

Mr. Gerben Poortenga was one of the first of Holland descent to be engaged in business in the Comstock area. He started making greenhouse sash for the needs of local celery growers in 1926. Mr. Albert Slager joined him as a partner in 1929 and the business was expanded. The business was carried on in the



Garrett Vander Wall lived in Comstock on Tunier Road (now L Ave.) from approximately 1886 to 1911. When their home burned in 1911 he moved his family to Hoeks' Court in Kalamazoo, but continued to work his land in Comstock. He raised vegetables and celery, selling mostly to the Burdick Hotel. He was the father-in-law of Frank Bell.

building now housing Collison's Super Market. The company of Poortenga and Slager ceased operation in 1960. A picture and additional information was carried in the 1975 News Letter.



Poortenga & Slager Lumber & Mfg. Co. provided greenhouse sash, bars and other building materials. Photo taken about 1933.



Mr. Gerben Poortenga (in his 92nd year)

Mr. Poortenga also built a number of the better homes in celery growing areas for some of the more prosperous early celery growers in the early part of the twentieth century. Mr. Poortenga still resides at 602 River Street, is ninety years old, and still enjoys good health. He is still a familiar figure walking our streets almost daily, to get his exercise.



Celery field in Comstock with celery boarded for bleaching. Person unknown.



Mrs. Stenzel showing the quality of celery raised in Comstock.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

In Comstock previous to the year 1924 the information seems to be a little sketchy as far as the fire fighters are concerned. The first fire fighters were composed of a few volunteers who manned a bucket brigade. The buckets were kept at the First Methodist church which was across the tracks on the north side. When there was a fire the men would assemble at the church and get the buckets and go to the fire. Of course the only way they could use them was where there was access to some water, a stream pond or cistern. However, in those days most homes had a cistern so they used either pails or a hand pump; sometimes both inside and outside the house. With a lot of strength and fortitude, progress was made with many disappointments and heartbreaks.

Some time after that, a wheel-driven cart was invented by the men. It had a hose with some kind of a pump attached, but they still needed adequate water supply. Can you imagine the pumping and frustration? This was a great improvement over those buckets, however. This 'vehicle' was moved to the south side of the river and I suspect the celery farmers had something to do with the pump on the rig. It was housed near the corner of River and Lake streets. At the time there was a fire reported on the end of Knight street, which was two blocks up Lake street and one block long running to the river. By the time the men pushed the cart the three blocks they were so exhausted they couldn't fight the fire and it burned down - and right beside the river too! One fellow tells about the Methodist Church burning around the winter of 1928. He thought in November, anyhow it was plenty cold and the Kalamazoo fire company, for the first time ever, came out from town and put their hose in the pond but couldn't save it. Many helped to empty the church of hymnals and other things that they could carry out until they wouldn't let them go back in. Of course they couldn't save it, but they almost drained the pond. Plans were started right away to build a new church and I understand the Carpenters mortgaged their home to make this possible.

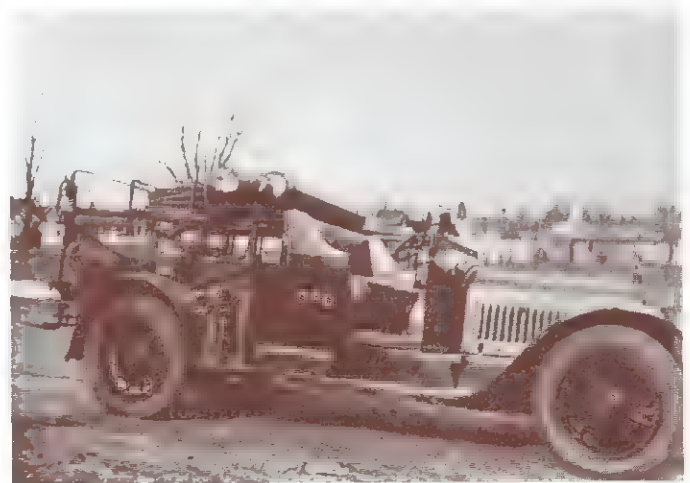
About this time, people began to realize they needed better fire protection. Mrs. Swift was asked to collect monies for a fire protection association. The fee was two dollars per family per year. Now there was money to work with. A group got together and bought a model T truck and an old fire truck from some bankrupt sale. The men worked to put a fire truck together on the model T truck. This was their first real fire truck and it would only go twenty-five miles an hour, on the straight roads. Mr. Stoutmeyer

was the driver of this first truck. The kids used to hop aboard for a ride and he would get very mad at them, but what fun that was and I'm sure many still get a chuckle out of it!

It seems that the first truck was at times a problem because it had many homes. The volunteers all had their ideas about where it should be kept. It was kept at the Johnson's garage on River street between old U.S. 12 and Michigan avenue. Then moved to Peterson's garage in the same block, then to McQueen's garage.

About this time, firemen decided to get better organized and elected a fire chief. Mr. Len House was the first chief so the truck was moved back to the south side of the river, so as to be close to the chief. It was kept right behind the store on the corner of River and Lake streets. In 1932 Mr. Ernest House was elected the new chief so the fire truck was again moved back across the river to the House residence on corner of River street and old U.S. 12. A siren was put on the garage where the truck was housed. About this time the school on 26th street burned and they had trouble getting the truck up the hill. I understand they all had to push it. The next major fire was when Knights Park burned and Kalamazoo also assisted and it was close to the river but it was a total loss. It seems that there was enough money now so the men decided they needed three pairs of boots and they would be kept in the garage with the truck. The next morning all three pair were missing?

Now it seems a fire district was to be organized and they bought another truck, which was an old paddy wagon and fixed it up. It was an old Packard.



After some major changes and hard work, the old paddy wagon is snappy looking Packard Fire fighter.

Many stories were passed around that the population was too dense to form a district, so Dave Brown circulated petitions, but it was dropped till later. Some time later, the school district was used. After one fire district was established, it was decided to improve the truck situation and get better organized. The next fire truck they purchased was called Daisy June.



Extra special Daisy June

The firemen did a lot of work on this truck as she was a special '34 Chevy with two 30 gallon soda acid tanks on the back. This truck had to go greater distances and fight different kinds of fires with a fire district established. Later they added a 500 gallon water tank for pressure. The firemen really did enjoy this truck because it had more power and they kept on improving it. She was a real special truck and still is dear to the hearts of many a fireman that used her.

Mr. Carl Sherwood was the township supervisor about this time and things were getting better

organized. It was decided that Mr. Stoutmeyer would build a garage and it would house the fire truck and also it would be used for the township hall. The truck would be moved out when the voting would take place. We were really growing. \$4.00 per month for rent at first and later it was upped to \$8.00 per month. After all, a lot of business was taking place.

Now two fire districts were to be established and we had more volunteers. The firemen would meet at the garage and I understand the supervisor would meet with them also. They would adjourn the meeting and a little later they would re-assemble at George and Mamies out on U.S. 12 to hash over all the problems of the township and the fire department, just to clear the air!

The community was really starting to grow and people were more interested in their community. The Fire department needed more room and more firefighters and the garage at the point, between Michigan Avenue and old U.S. 12 was a bigger garage. After this move, Earl Washburn was appointed the new chief and Miss Clela Johnson was asked to be the relief girl to man the station when there was a fire. She was the first woman volunteer to join in 1943 and she stayed with the department for 16 years. She would call all the volunteers and tell them where the fire was located. Mr. Earl Sootsman was the assistant chief. A new 1943 fire truck was the first truck ever purchased new for the department. It was called the Seagrave and had to be released by the government because of the war restrictions. Comstock was very fortunate to get that priority. Mr. Sootsman later left Comstock to become the chief at the Kalamazoo Northwood station. Mr. Austin Allen, local druggist, would catch the fire truck when it came by the drugstore.



The fleet's in! Showing off in the noon-day sun.

Mr. Clarence Neal was elected supervisor. The township board decided they needed a township hall to keep all the records and to hold their meetings, which were getting larger as there was a lot of interest growing in community affairs. So it was now decided to build a new township hall and a fire station combined. The property at the township park was plenty big enough and very centrally located. This is on the corner of River street and Comstock avenue, which had previously been named Lake street. The new building was completed in 1951 and in October of that year the fire department was moved in. Daisy June and the Seagrave No. 43 were the first fire trucks to be in the new station. Mr. Harry Smith was the assistant chief. Clela Johnson was the relief girl at night and Mrs. Raymond Slager was asked to go on days and she lived right across the street. She stayed a short time and Bert Lisk was asked to be relief days. She stayed with the department 24 years. Later Pete Knapp was relief girl and alternated days. The relief girls took a course in communications and were given operator permits to man the radios between trucks and the station. All firemen were required to operate the radios and receive permits. In 1951 a new tanker was purchased and aided in grass fires as they were going greater distances. This tanker was called for one day by the chief but no firemen were available; they were out on two other fires. Mrs. Lisk had to come in to assist, so Clela and Bert looked at each other, gave each other enough moral support — so they took that tanker up over the tracks to the big grass fire and it was put out. They didn't ask us to stay and fight the fire. The chief thanked us with a smile and promptly took us back to man the station.

Mr. Harry Lisk was appointed the first fire commissioner at the new central station by the township board. He visited all the surrounding fire departments as well as the ones in Kalamazoo to get all the information the board wanted in order to make our department one of the best run and operated as well as best equipped around here. A lot of time was spent on research for improvements and a great deal was accomplished. At about this time the dept. lost its volunteer status and became a paid participating member department. Mr. Harry Smith passed away and Scott Smeltzer was appointed chief. Mr. John Dunn came from New York as the assistant chief in 1956. Mrs. Dorothy Smeltzer soon joined the department as an operator.

In 1955 a special new four wheel drive grass truck was purchased with many new features. It has two seats mounted on the front fenders so the men are right out in front and can see what to do and can man the hoses from there. It is very efficient and very effective. No. 55 also was outfitted with all our

rescue equipment: a boat, motor and porta power to extricate people from damaged cars after wrecks, all the first aid equipment and the CPR equipment. (heart massage process). They also have a resuscitator and oxygen supply with a stethoscope. In 1961 the department purchased plectrons for each fireman. About this time, Mrs. Lisk went on as a night relief operator and stayed in that capacity. Miss Donna Airhart also joined the operators for awhile. Mrs. Barbara Sootsman also joined the operators about this time.

In 1967 a Ford, 1000-gallon-per-minute pumper was purchased and is at the central station.

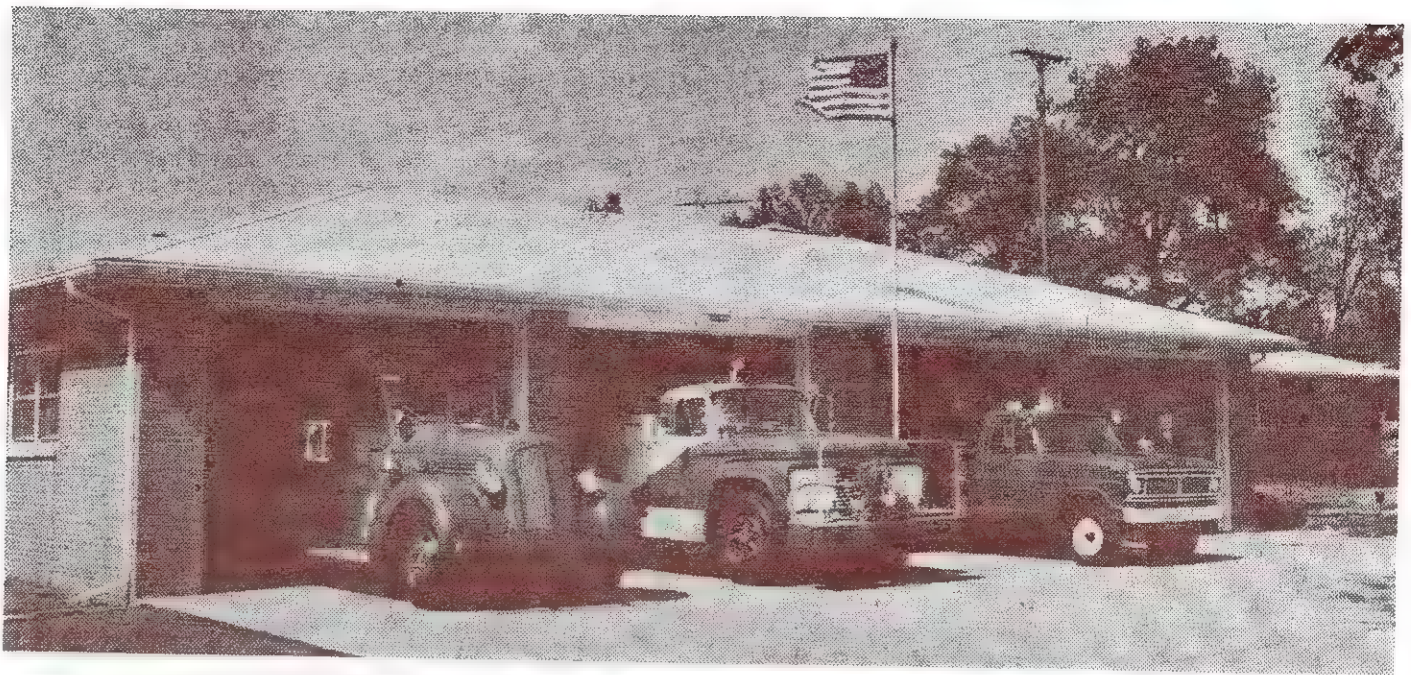
In 1969 Chief Smeltzer became ill and assistant chief Dunn was appointed acting chief. Mr. Smeltzer passed away in 1970 and John Dunn was appointed chief. Mrs. Flossie Dunn and Johanna Leversee joined the department as operators. Chuck Smeltzer was assistant to Chief Dunn in 1975 and Jim Meints as assistant in 1976.

In the meantime, Mr. Lisk went off the board and Bob Morris was fire commissioner until Joe Van Bruggen was appointed fire commissioner. The board decided to build a new fire station in the north part of the township because of the great growth and need of fire protection. The township had previously purchased the property, corner of east H avenue and North 26th street, with this purpose in mind. The north station was built as a residential station and was completed and moved into October of 1961. Mr. Charles Crank was appointed assistant chief and moved in October 1961. Mr. Richard Schippers was appointed assistant chief January 11, 1965. This station had 2 bays for trucks. In 1970 Mr. Crank left the department and Dick Schippers was appointed chief of the north station. He is still chief at the present time. Mr. Robert Newman is the assistant chief. He is one of the charter members at the north station. Mrs. Lois Schippers joined as the radio operator.

The north station started with one truck, a 1961 Ford 500G P.M. pumper, then added a 1940 ¾ ton 4-wheel-drive grass fire truck. In 1971, two bays were added to the station and Engine No. 43, the Seagrave truck, was moved from central station to north station.

In July, 1975, a 1949 Seagrave 85 foot aerial ladder truck was purchased from Kalamazoo and the men restored this truck like new. On Dec. 17, 1975, two new 1975 Mack Diesel 1000 G.P.M. pumpers were put into service, one at each station. They have 5 pieces of equipment. They also went from 10 members in 1961 to the present 18, with 3 charter members.

The township board decided to make the central



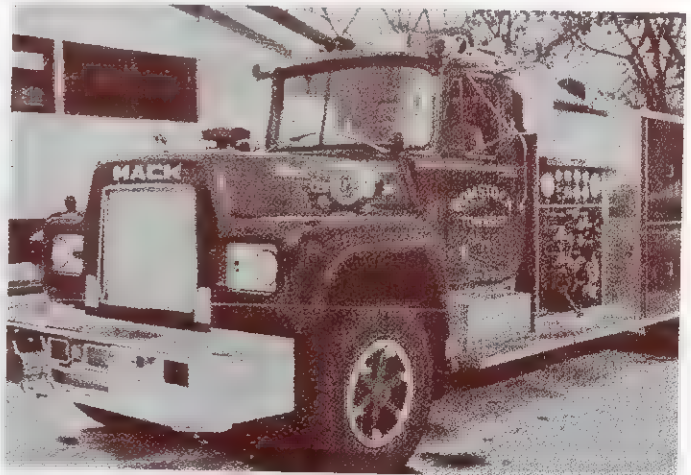
TWO NEW FIRE TRUCK BAYS AT COMSTOCK TOWNSHIP'S STATION NO. 2
Fire Station Serves North Comstock Area

—Gazette photos



The Seagrave aerial ladder truck all restored and ready for service.

in wrecks. Before this, only two were available in the state. We were third to get ours. North station was called out of the county to help on an emergency. This equipment alternates between the two stations every other month, whichever station is answering the calls. All the emergency equipment at the central station is now kept on Engine No. 69. The boat is on a trailer. There are 27 members at this station. Cliff Judy, Bob Kik and Doc Jennings are the only living retired firemen. The women volunteers were all replaced by firemen.



Comstock Township Central and North Fire Stations received delivery December 17 of two new Pierce 1,000 gallon per minute pumpers. These two new units were built on the Mack chassis that were delivered to the Pierce Manufacturing Company in Appleton, Wisconsin this past February 14. The total cost of the two units including the Mack chassis was \$102,112 of which \$100,000 came from federal revenue sharing monies. The units were placed into service December 22, 1975.

station into a resident station after the new township hall was completed. The Dunn's moved into the residence at the fire station in June of 1972. Mrs. Flossie Dunn joined the department as a radio operator. Later on, Mrs. Gladys Rork joined the radio operators.

In 1973, a JAWS OF LIFE was purchased. It's an instrument used to extricate people who are pinned

LIBRARY

The rural circulation of books in Kalamazoo County in the late 1930's was undertaken through the organization of library branches. This was a state service under the Works Progress Administration.

Our library was the first in the county to be organized. It was started in August 1938 under county library supervisor, Mrs. Irene Heeringa with Mrs. Ada McCloud as librarian. 500 books were sent from Lansing, furniture and other books were donated. Space was provided in a grocery store operated by Mr. and Mrs. W.J. Smith, on the east side of River street, south of the Kalamazoo river. A book club was started which met once a month. Each member purchased two books a year and these were donated to the library after the members had read them.

During 1939, 250 new books were added to the shelves. The library was then moved to a building on old U.S. 12 just west of River street. This space, provided by the township, had been a barber shop. On May 2, 1939, \$150 was turned over to the library by the township. A move to establish a county library with its branches, supported by country funds, failed. The library then became a township responsibility. Mrs. McCloud resigned and was replaced by Mrs. Isabel Weddon. The library was again moved into a small building which had once served as an office for a gasoline station at the corner of River street and old U.S. 12.

The township electors annually approved grants for support of the library; the April 1947 budget being \$2,821.40. The library was again moved to space rented in a store building on Parcom street.



Parcom Street building, library in the center rooms: later building burned.

Mrs. Mahala Inglis was hired as librarian assistant. Total books at this time were 5,450. A small amount of state aid was also received at this time. A library board was appointed by the township board. After a favorable special election, 18 for and 13 against, on Dec. 30, 1951, the present Brookside and King Highway (M-96) site for the library was made available.



New library, looking south.

The proposal to set up a township free library and levy a tax of up to 1 mill carried by a vote of 661 to 428 at an election held on April 5, 1955. The transfer of \$25,000 for the construction of a library building was authorized on May 2. A new six member board was appointed to serve until the next biennial election when board members were to be elected according to state law.

There were now approximately 6,000 volumes moved into the new building. Mrs. Gladys Garrison was librarian and Mrs. Marie Owens was assistant. The basement remained unfinished for a number of years, but in 1960 it was finished and equipped as a children's department. On March 1, 1965 there were 13,770 volumes in the library; 6,000 to 7,000 of these in the children's section.

By 1969 the building was becoming overcrowded. An addition was constructed on the east end of the building, being completed by the fall of this same year.



Present library, looking southeast.

Carpeting was installed on the first floor. The public rest rooms were enlarged and equipped with rails for the handicapped. A staff lounge was added and the office processing rooms were enlarged.

A sewing center featuring patterns of all sizes and descriptions and instruction books is still another service.

In 1973 the Michigan Legislature passed a bill



Library interior, first floor, looking east.

In September 1972, Mrs. Garrison retired after 21 years with the library. Mrs. Owens was appointed to succeed her.

The service area includes not only the township, but students and parents of all school districts in the township. In 1973 the Kalamazoo Federated Library System was organized through the efforts of Dr. Mark Crum, librarian of the Kalamazoo Public Library. This system includes libraries of Allegan, Augusta, Comstock, Galesburg, Parchment, Portage, Paw Paw, Hartford, Lawton, Plainwell, Vicksburg and Kalamazoo. Reference requests, photo-copies, audio-visual items including pictures, records, museum cases and books not in the member libraries are picked up and delivered to member libraries twice a week from the headquarters library. The membership fee for each library is 10 cents per capita for the population served, paid to the headquarters library, Kalamazoo. Sixteen mm. movie projectors, film strip and slide projectors, tape recorders, etc. are made available to member libraries.

Other services are offered by the Comstock library. Wheelchairs, crutches, canes and walkers are available for emergency loan to the temporarily handicapped.

allocating 30 cents per capita for state aid. The Comstock library was also the recipient of revenue sharing funds. A 3M automatic copying machine and an additional typewriter for use of the public were purchased. A small fee is charged for copying. Revenue sharing funds were used to install sidewalks across the front and sides of the lot. Twenty-four framed reproductions of famous paintings were purchased. Patrons may borrow one or two pictures of their choice, hang them in their home for thirty days, return them and borrow others.

Regular 6-week story hours are provided for the very young. Summer programs, such as handicraft classes, reading clubs and other activities for school children are offered.

According to the 1974-75 annual report, the library had 25,825 volumes with an annual circulation of 64,000. Fifty magazines and 8 newspapers are received. There are 5 persons on the staff.

The library has had the support of the community from the very beginning. Owing to increased valuation of the township, it has not been necessary to levy the full 1 mill tax for support of the library as authorized when the library was organized in 1955.

SCHOOLS

In researching the history of schools in Comstock, it becomes only too clear the enormous strides education has taken.

The first school in Comstock Township was taught by Betsy Comings in 1831. The schoolhouse was a shanty that a man had built for a dwelling. She had six pupils and received one dollar per week for her services.

Another early school built in Section 13 (near Galesburg) was put up when the pioneers held a "work bee." This school had twelve pupils in 1834 and was a log cabin. A few years later, a very good school building was erected near the corners west of the village and used also for the community church and town hall for many years.

Comstock Village school was built in 1833 on land which was given by Mr. Horace Comstock. It was the first school in the village and was located on the west side of Comstock creek; about where the Central Middle School is now (26th Street across from Peer Pond). The first teacher was Miss Betsy Percival, the daughter of Mr. Samuel Percival, a prominent citizen. She taught the year of 1834 in a log building 12 by 14 by 8 feet high. This building was erected at Mr. Comstock's expense, he, asking in return, that the people should call the village and township "Comstock."

Funds, or the lack of them, didn't worry the pioneers much. School was held anywhere from three to seven months a year in direct proportion to the state of the treasury. The teacher always got paid; sometimes a year late, but they always got it.

The practice in one rural school was for each pupil to pay $\frac{1}{2}$ cord of wood, to be delivered at the schoolhouse the first week of school (usually November). The wood was to be corded and measured by the teacher, and anyone who neglected to comply, was to be charged 75¢ on the tax bill.

In the southeast corner of the township (Green Meadow area), the local residents planned in 1841 to set up a public school to be known as District #9. In the fall of 1841, the pioneers voted to raise \$150 to build a school house and \$18 to buy a site. The group voted for a "mail" teacher, Andrew Clark, and at the next annual meeting, \$5 was raised for a "back house!"

The organization of the eleven school districts in the township in the early days is somewhat sketchy. On the 28th day of May, 1842, the Board of School Inspectors met and established the boundaries of all the school districts except numbers 8 and 15. By 1859, the first record of the eleven school districts was as follows: No. 1 fractional Comstock and Kala-

mazoo Township with the school on the east taking in Galesburg, No. 4 in the northwest corner of the township, No's 5,6,8 to the north, No. 9 east of what is now S. 26th Street, No. 10 fractional, No. 15 fractional Comstock and Kalamazoo with the school on the corner now occupied by the branch office of the American National Bank at Sprinkle and Miller. In 1866, the number of pupils in all the schools was 788. Several of the districts were fractional; that is, extending into adjacent townships.

The second school in the Village of Comstock was erected on the site of the first and had two rooms and a basement with a basement type heater. The first official fire drill was held here. It worked efficiently, and managed to get all the children out of the school safely when the school burned down. There were 70 pupils in the building at the time of the fire. The building was insured for \$1,200 in two good companies.

In 1898, the school board called a meeting of the legal voters of the district to take measures for the erection of a new school building to take the place of the one that burned. The residents voted to spend no more than \$2,500 for the construction of this building.



West side of school in 1906 with all students, teachers and transportation wagons. A second story was later added to this building and it subsequently became the high school for many years.

The third Comstock school was then built on the same site. It was a one story framed building, later expanded to an additional story, and used until 1942.

Consolidation

In 1906, the school districts of Comstock Village, Chenery, Simmons, Maple Grove and Knapp were united to form the first consolidated school in Michigan. The new district used the building mentioned above which was located near the geographical center of the district where Horace Comstock had erected the first school.



First graduation class of Comstock Public Schools, 1908. Left to right: Leon Miller, Gleason Allen, Phoebee Nutton, Mable (Woodhouse) Bullard, Ethel Pease, Raymond Warren, Rose Cretsinger, Clell Peer.

At the time of this picture, the school enrollment was 189 students and six teachers.

The Comstock Consolidated School lasted until 1914. There were several reasons for the dissolution of the consolidated schools. One of the main reasons was the conflicts constantly arising between different factions of the community. Many other reasons added to the disillusionment of the residents. Probably the final "straw" was when two board members got into a fight during a meeting.

Finally, in 1914, the four year high school was dissolved and the students were sent to Western Normal or Central High School in Kalamazoo. Thus ended the first consolidated school system in Michigan.



Mrs. Mable Bullard has been a lifetime resident of Comstock and is the sole surviving member of the 1908 graduating class.



Southeast section of Central Middle School under construction in 1921. Located on Prairie Road (26th Street).

In 1921, the southeast section of the Middle School was built with the further additions in 1925, 1929, 1936, and 1941. The third floor was later built along with the cafeteria, shop and gym, and sections of the first and second floors were remodeled. The final remodeling of classrooms took place in 1972. This building is no longer in use due to a decline in student population.

According to the Kalamazoo Gazette, in December of 1936 a PWA project was announced to build a \$49,000 (45% federal and 55% school district) addition to the grade school of auditorium, gym and heating plant. This would serve as a link between the grade school and future high school. In April, 1942, the dedication of the new \$122,000 high school took place.

In 1927, Comstock included the following school districts: #1 fractional, #1 fractional Comstock Village, #3 fractional Galesburg, #5, #6 and #9.



Hoover School — brand new!

November 5, 1930 the Kalamazoo Gazette carried the story of the dedication of Hoover School. Called one of the most progressive and fastest growing districts in the County, located at the corner of Knapp's Road (30th Street) and East Avenue, an enrollment of 75 pupils in the first eight grades was reported. Teaching staff consisted of Leah Brown for the lower grades and Warren Brown, high grades. Eight years before, the enrollment was 13 pupils.

Present Day Schools

September 10, 1967, the high school presently in use was dedicated. Mr. George Long was the school superintendent. During this time, Comstock's school population rapidly increased. Many of the new families in the district represented skilled and professional people with high goals for their children. This fact increased demands for development and accreditation. Preparations began in 1965 with final approval being granted in April 1968.

In January of 1976, the student population, grades 9 through 12, was 1,009. The principal was Howard J. Ewles. The Comstock High School certainly has made great strides from the first consolidated high school in 1906, and offers a very broad range of programs as well as opportunities for after-school activities.

The Eastern and Western Elementary schools were constructed in the 1950's to relieve the over-crowded conditions of Comstock's one school. Mr. Leslie Green was superintendent at this time. The schools were designed with an ultimate capacity of 400 elementary students.

Mr. Mainord Weaver is currently principal of the Eastern elementary school. The students are learning many things in preparation for the future.

Western Elementary is also a very progressive school under the guidance of Larry Lindeman, principal. This school has at present a decreased number of classrooms due to the decreased student population, and is being used for administrative offices as well as classrooms.

In 1962, the Gull Road District on the Northeast corner of Comstock dissolved and the district was placed in the Comstock school district by the Kalamazoo Valley Intermediate School Board. Comstock received about 250 students. Mr. Paul Harris is the principal. The school is a very progressive one, and during January, 1976, a wonderful program celebrating the Bicentennial was held. There were films, and displays which included an old Colonial school, Colonial crafts, occupations and foods.

In 1965, the Green Meadow School District to the south of Comstock voted to join the Comstock system. From this merger Comstock received 225 students plus some high grade residential and industrial land including the land where the giant new General Motors Stamping plant is located.

Under the direction of Mrs. Jan Connor, the Green Meadow School has been given the Roscrans Award for conservation work for two consecutive years.

North Elementary, 3100 N. 26th Street, was constructed in 1958 with additions following in 1962, 1965 and 1972. This school has a student capacity of 550 with the 1975-76 enrollment at 440. Mr. Bill

Buhro is the principal.

The newest addition to the physical properties of Comstock School system is the beautiful new Northeast Middle School located near the intersection of East Main and 28th Street. The building was constructed in 1973 and houses the 7th and 8th grades. Mr. Ceville Hinman, the principal, says academic growth has shown gains each year and compares favorably with surrounding junior high schools.

As of November, 1975, there were 3,219 students enrolled in Comstock Schools. The Comstock school district encompasses parts of Pavilion Township, City of Kalamazoo, City of Portage and Comstock Township.

The Community Education Program was started in February of 1970. In 1975, Comstock merged with Galesburg-Augusta's program to offer a broader range of opportunities under the direction of Mr. Larry Dopp. High school completion classes are free to any adult who desires to obtain a high school diploma. Leisure time classes may be taken also. There are a variety of subjects: car repair, painting, sewing, cooking, improvement of reading or math skills, and many more.

From a one-room log cabin to a multi-million dollar system with seven buildings now in use — if Mr. Horace Comstock could only see us now!

Material used in this synopsis comes from many different sources — Comstock Library, Kalamazoo Public Library, Mr. Barry Dopp, Mrs. Alice Weber and many more. Pictures used are through the courtesy of C. Dale and Karla Reed. Text written by Mrs. Charles (Donna) Chrisman, Mrs. C. Dale (Karla) Reed, and Mrs. Dale (Nancy) Deal.

THE SCHOOL BUS

When the place was new and the building built
On hay-bale seats sometimes atilt
O'er rocks and ruts, through rain and heat
With lunch pails full (they'd later eat)
Came Comstock children on the wagon bus,
And so they studied in the little school
To read and write and measure by rule
But at years end as he got off the bus
It seemed Johnny said, "This trip's 'teejus.' "

The children grew to be quite a flock
Many more came of good Dutch stock
The township said "We'll cooperate."
First school in the state to consolidate.
The new curriculum was broader in scope
So Jan should be better able to cope
But it seemed as the wagon bus rounded a bend
Jan said, "I think this trip never end."

As years passed by the school still grew.
 New building of brick commanded a view
 Of town buildings and railroad by falls and pond.
 Old students now are grandads fond
 Of todays young who wait for the yellow school bus.
 They're chatting, complaining and making a fuss.
 Transportation has changed in many ways
 But it's nice to recall those good old days.

Norda Massuch

TRANSPORTATION IN 1976

There are 26 drivers and a total of 64 runs. The busses travel 2,500 miles per day and 450,000 miles per year. The drivers are well trained for the position which requires all drivers to carry Red Cross First Aid cards, they must be certified bus drivers, attend a training school each year and take a road and written test each year.



Fleet of busses at the High School.



'School Bus' Transportation in 1976.

TRANSPORTATION IN 1908

Students living more than three quarters of a mile from school rode in a covered wagon. Each driver was expected to furnish blankets, steps and comfortable seats and earned about \$40 per year.

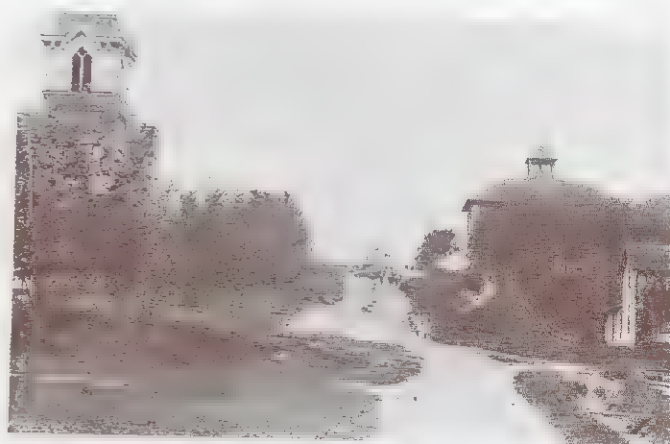
The horses were only allowed to walk and roads were full of chuck and water holes. Some students spent two hours per day on the "bus." It was a long, uncomfortable ride!



'School Bus' Transportation in 1908.



These three wagons were the transportation corp when Comstock was consolidated in 1906.



The photographer was standing on the School Street crossing. School Street only went to the top of the hill to the school and cemetery. Taken in the early 1900's.



An early picture of Comstock High School (26th Street location).



Taken from Worden Street. These buildings housed all grades in Comstock School District. The high school is on the hill, grade school in front with the superintendents residence to the left. About 1929-30.



Comstock High School 1941. This building was razed soon after this picture. ('42 or '43).

DID YOU KNOW?

The first known "post office" was a wooden box nailed to a tree on Territorial Road near the center of the village. Postage was 25¢ to send a letter. Pick up and delivery by pony express went both ways on Territorial Road. To our knowledge, not one letter was ever lost or stolen. Rah! Rah!



The entire Comstock School group in about 1888. All barefooted and hatted!

POST OFFICE

The Comstock Post Office was established on Feb. 28, 1832. It was in many types of buildings such as a grocery store, small hotel, railroad station, sun parlor in a private home, rear of the Odd Fellow Hall, cleaners establishment and finally it's own building.

Josiah Loveland has the distinction of holding the office of postmaster for the longest period of time — from 1852 - 1882.

Comstock's postmasters and period of service:

Lyman I. Daniel	Feb. 28, 1832
Caleb Eldred	Aug. 9, 1832
Horace H. Comstock	March 12, 1834
George W. Peacock	Feb. 26, 1846
Joseph B. Hull	July 14, 1849
Enoch S. Kellogg	July 19, 1850
Josiah Loveland	Feb. 16, 1852
David S. Crowell	July 2, 1856
Josiah Loveland	June 20, 1857
Orson G. Loveland	June 28, 1882
Patrick Rooney	Nov. 28, 1894
Lee A. Mason	Nov. 6, 1896
William L. Matthews	Feb. 17, 1913
Eula B. Mason	May 4, 1914
Myrtle P. Carson	Nov. 20, 1920
Mrs. Lila Vosburg	Oct. 5, 1925
Arthue J. Price	April 2, 1934
Miss Harriet Tuttle	March 31, 1953
Robert Doud	April 13, 1964

Prior to the year 1852 when Josiah Loveland became postmaster, the locations of the Post Office are unknown with the exception of the time of Horace Comstock's postmastership when it was housed in his home, the old Comstock home located on the southeast corner of Brookview and East Michigan Ave.

Beginning in 1852 it was first housed in the home of Josiah Loveland (the present Reed house next to the railroad station at the crossing on Gull Prairie Road. (N. 26th St.)



Post Office was located in this railroad station.

From there it moved to the hotel at the old Comstock place. Then it moved back to Prairie Road and the Mason home just north of the present Odd Fellow Hall.



The Mason House on Gull Prairie Road about 1910.

Briefly it was in the back of the I.O.O.F. Hall and then back again to the Mason house. It's next location was in the Montague Grocery or Baldwin building also on Prairie Road.



Baldwin Building on Gull Prairie Road.

East Michigan Ave. was it's next home in the old Norris building which we knew as the Tiny Inn.

It stayed on Michigan Ave. next in the Peer building. From there it went to River St. in a small building at Comstock Ave., and then into the Ritz Cleaner building.

Its final move was to the present Comstock Post Office Building on King Highway. At last it had a home of it's own.

Mail came into and left Comstock on the Michigan Central Railroad. A unique method of receiving and dispatching the mail was used in Comstock. There was a mechanical arm at the crossing at Prairie Road (26th St.) that held the mail sack at full length. It was hooked by the passing train by an arm suspended from the mail car. At the same time incoming mail was kicked off. It was picked up along the track by someone representing the postmaster. Sometimes the bag was bounced off objects and thrown under the train.

There was a sign on both sides of the tracks warning people to beware of mail sacks being thrown at this point. One train from each direction stopped once a day to deliver and pick up bulk mail.

This method of mail delivery was continued until the early 1950's.



Silas Wright (father of the postmistress, Lila Vosburg). He had just picked up the mail bags at the crossing and was delivering them to the post office in the front of the Norris building on Mich. Ave.



Present Post Office building at Brookside and King Highway.

CHURCHES

If the walls of the churches could only talk, what a great history could be told! They would tell of babies baptized. They would speak of children and young dedicating their lives to service. Happy weddings also, and they would mourn with those who came to pay their last respects to their loved ones. Joyous Christmas and Easter celebrations were here and many, many dedicated people attended from year to year to study the greatest book of all — the Bible.

In 1843 there was no church in Comstock. The first religious meetings began in 1844 when a group of citizens formed the Alphadelphian Society (meaning Brotherhood). They met at each others houses and for four years had many visiting pastors, including Rev. T. W. Merrill who performed the first marriage in Comstock.

The Methodist Protestant Church was Comstock's first building and began services August 11, 1864 with Rev. A. Achinson as pastor. It was known as the "White Church" and is now the present Odd Fellows Hall.



The little White Church located at Chubb and 26th Streets.



Methodist Church looking down school hill, facing south.

Mrs. George Woodhouse was the oldest known member having joined in 1880. In the 1880's some members became dissatisfied with the church and hence the brick building which was called the Methodist Episcopal Church. Rev. John White was the first minister.



Methodist Church at west end of Chubb St.

One of its first members was Mrs. Effie Dingman. Her uncle, Mr. Josiah Loveland, was Superintendent.

Many people gave their time and money to build and furnish these churches. Among these were Mrs. Elizabeth Allen whose father furnished the stone for the "White Church." Uncle Eli Anderson was one of the founders. He was the great grandfather of Mrs. J.E. Sager. Perry Peer, father of Mrs. Sadie Gleason, and Archie and Clell Peer built the pulpit furniture and pews which were still in use in 1960.

In December, 1928, the brick church burned and soon a building plan was underway.



The Methodist Church after the fire.

A Mrs. Lawrence of Galesburg donated two lots on Price Street (Now King's Highway), and two others were purchased, a banquet was held and pledges made. Among those who contributed generously were Jacob Kindleberger of Parchment, Smith and Ernest Burnham of Kalamazoo, and Daniel Hopping of Sturgis. In about one year the building was completed and dedicated by the District Superintendent, Dr. R.E. Meader.

Among those most responsible for the success of this venture were Mr. and Mrs. Roy Carpenter, Mrs. Arch Thompson, R.C. Rose, Bert Coates, Mrs. Martin Terrell, and Marvin Hall.

Rev. D.D. King was pastor at this time and has been followed by several others including Rev. Richard Wearne who came in 1933. He and his wife were great leaders and the church originated family night suppers, the Epworth League, and other societies. Rev. Osborne came in 1942, and the church experienced a steady growth under his guidance. The present pastor is Rev. David Charter who took over in February 1974. Comstock now has more than a dozen churches of different denominations, among which are:

- Comstock Christian Reformed
- Comstock Disciples of Christ
- Comstock Bible Church
- Covenant Church
- Trinity Baptist Church
- New Hope Baptist Church
- Eastern Hills Christian Reform
- Lawndale Church
- Green Meadow Bible Church
- Free Will Baptist
- Bible Church on Comstock Ave.



Present Methodist Church on King Highway.

A BRIEF HISOTRY OF THE COMSTOCK CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH 1913-1976

It really began when Rev. J.R. Brink, Home Missionary from Grand Rapids, was instructed to work with a group of people in Comstock with the intent of establishing a church.

Rev. Brink arrived on the evening of September 12, 1913. The following day contact was made with the trustees of the Comstock Methodist Church who gladly consented to having us use their church building for services. Arrangements were made to meet in the morning and afternoon so there would be no conflict with their services.

Notification of the services were given to our people, and the following day, September 14, worship services were held with 106 people in attendance. Good attendance continued, so plans were soon made to be organized as a congregation.

The organization service took place on November 28, 1913, and consistory members chosen as follows: Mr. J.W. Slager and Mr. C. Ruimveld as elders, and Mr. G. Poortenga and G. Dusseljee as deacons.

At a congregational meeting held December 1, 1913, it was decided to build a basement church on the site where our church now stands.

With a considerable amount of volunteer help the building was completed and ready for use in March 1914.

In the summer of this same year the parsonage was constructed which still houses our pastor's family.

In October 1916 the Rev. John Keizer became our first pastor coming to us from Paterson, New Jersey.

Due to a steady growth it became necessary to provide more seating room. Plans were made to build upon the present foundation, which was completed in the fall of 1922.

In 1923 Rev. Keizer retired after 40 years in the ministry of the gospel.

During the period of 1923 to 1932 we were ministered to by the Rev. Paul DeKoekkoek, 1923-1926; Rev. M. VanVessem 1926-1928; Rev. John H. Beld, 1929-1932. In September, 1932, the Rev. Peter A. Spoelstra became our fifth pastor, ministering in our midst until 1944.

On November 28, 1938, we were privileged by the grace of God, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of our church.

During Rev. Spoelstra's stay our present Schanz Pipe Organ was purchased. A fitting dedication program took place on June 13, 1941.

After a brief vacancy a call was extended to and accepted by Candidate John H. Olthoff in July 1944.

Lack of seating space prompted the enlargement of the auditorium. This was accomplished by means of

an addition to the front of the church, thus providing space for seventy more seats. After serving us for six years Rev. Olthoff moved to Iowa.

In January, 1952, Rev. John O. Bouwsma became our pastor, coming to us from Grandville, Michigan. In 1957 more property was purchased for parking space, at the same time providing for a River Street entrance to the parking lot.

In February 1958 Rev. Bouwsma retired from the ministry after serving his six years.

Rev. Herman Minnema of Worthington, Minnesota became our pastor in March of 1959. The highlight in our history during his ministry was the celebration of our 50th anniversary.

Four of our former pastors joined us on this festive occasion by speaking and ministering to us.

In 1964 Rev. Minnema accepted an appointment as teacher of Bible at the Kalamazoo Christian High School.

Our present pastor, Rev. Hessel Bouma, Jr., began his ministry in September 1964.

The year 1969 improvements were made in the auditorium with the installation of carpeting and new seating.

Property across the street was purchased and remodeled for use as Sunday School classes and also serves as a meeting place for other groups.

Recently the church basement was completely remodeled including new kitchen facilities.

We are happy to be a part of the Comstock Community and be able to contribute to its growth and spiritual welfare.



Christian Reformed Church

PARKS

INTRODUCTION

The public parks in Comstock Township had their origin in 1936. According to Township records, "on Oct. 6, 1936 a petition of 62 Freeholders asked the Comstock Township Board to appoint a Park Commission. At that time Frank Bell was chosen Chairman with Harlow Rice as a member of the Commission."

Records show that on July 19, 1939, the Park Commission was made up of Frank Bell, Harlow Rice and Forrest M. Dickinson. At that time the Commission authorized the expenditure of \$8,200.00 to purchase the deed and abstract for the "South Comstock Recreation Park." (This area is now Thomas Merrill Park).

At the same time the present Peer Park, located at Michigan Avenue and N. 26th Street, was purchased from the receivers of the old Peer Foundry Company for \$1,500.00

Through the years a number of Comstock residents have served as members of the Park Commission.

and Scout Island was cut through the middle by the new road. Scouting activities ceased and a cabin which stood on the north part of the island fell into disrepair. Frank Noble, formerly a teacher at the Comstock Middle School, was scoutmaster during this era.

Shortly after the building of the road the area was taken over by the Park Commission to maintain. Given the name of River Parks, they were provided with picnic tables, a few stoves were installed, and the parks were opened to the public.

Used mainly by fisherman and tourists, the river banks offered a place to try for a fish in the swirling waters. Large river bottom trees offered a shady canopy on hot summer days. During early May the flowering Redbud trees cover their leafless branches with magenta-pink bloom.

Now these parks are looking forward to a new destiny. The local VFW Post under Glen Baughan's direction has received permission from the Park Commission to enlarge the area. With no expense to the Township, these parks are to be completely rebuilt.



A Sunday afternoon at George Gates' private park, approximately 1920. It was located just southwest of the township hall for several hundred feet along the Kalamazoo River. A favorite 'outing' retreat for many county-wide residents as well as Comstock citizens.

RIVER PARKS

Years ago, before the present Kings Highway was built, this small land area in the Kalamazoo River was called "the Island." During the 1920's Boy Scouts made use of the place for summer outings. Later it became known as "Scout Island." Al Phillips was the inspiring organizer and scout leader at this time.

Kings Highway was built during 1937 and 1938

New and enlarged picnic areas, ball diamonds, parking areas and a circular drive will be installed. This is the VFW's way of saying — "Proud to help Comstock Township celebrate the Bi-Centennial during 1976."

CELERY STREET PARK

Land for this Park was turned over to the Park Commission by Township Supervisor Clarence Neal

during Sept. 1955. This property between Celery and Wright Streets had become a community dumping ground. Development was started Oct. 4, 1955 with general land clearance and removal of debris and large rocks. Grading allowed a drainage ditch to run from the celery fields to the south into the Kalamazoo river to the north of the Park.

The following spring the seeding of the lawn began and by early summer the first picnic tables were installed. The swing sets were installed during June, 1956 and a chain link backstop was erected for the ball diamond in July, 1958.

Originally a fine grove of shade trees covered the western portion of the Park. Many large White Elms, Black Oak, Hackberry, Sycamore, White Ash, Black Walnut and Bitternut Hickory made up the shady woodland. Today most of these trees are gone, victims of disease or old age. Only the Sycamore, White Ash and Bitternut Hickory remain.

This is essentially a community park, an oasis where local children and their parents can enjoy an outing near their homes. Now in its 20th year, this Park enjoys a summer program for children put on by the Comstock Parks and Recreation Commission. Qualified arts and crafts teachers from the Comstock Schools provide instruction and entertainment for neighborhood children.



Playground equipment used in park about 1971

According to Dale and Karla Reed, this was the site of the Percival-Loveland Mill. It was here that neighboring farmers brought their grain to be milled into flour. Power for the large grind stones came from a large wheel turned by the pond water. The dam and water falls date from the mid 1800's. The mill was dismantled prior to 1910, and lumber from it went into homes and barns built nearby.

Acquisition of additional land from Thomas Boven in 1971 and from Phillip Ackerman in 1974 extended the park property to its present northern limits along N. 26th Street. Both Ben Martin and Don Balkema worked on tree removal and grade development of the north part of the park.

The area was officially named James Fenimore Cooper Park on June 4, 1965. James Bell, chairman of the Park Commission, dedicated a bronze plaque on the face of the falls area in honor of the pioneer author.



Dedication of James Fenimore Cooper Park on June 4, 1965. Guest speaker Duane Burnham, Comstock Supervisor shown here with James Bell, Mr. Alexis Praus, Kalamazoo Historical Museum Curator, Mrs. Henry Kulesa, with her High School English class and many interested citizens.

Cooper was a relative of Horace Comstock, a founder of the Comstock area, and is thought to have visited here about 1850.

JAMES FENIMORE COOPER PARK

This park, which almost surrounds Cooper Pond, is bordered by N. 26th Street, Oran Avenue and Worden Street. Long known as the "second or middle pond," this area was used for years for summertime fishing and wintertime ice skating. James Bell relates that in winter huge bonfires were built to warm the skaters. A small shelter provided a place to put on skates.

It was not until December of 1954 that an improvement program was started in the newly developed park. Twelve shade trees including Norway Maples, Pin Oaks and Sycamores were planted.



Scenic view of bridge over the falls, looking northeast.

The pond and falls draw visitors from miles around. Artists gather here in summer and autumn to capture the beauty of the open water and the plunging waterfalls. It is not generally known that these ponds in Comstock's parks are made by the impounding of waters from Comstock Creek. This stream drains Lyons Lake among others, then flows into the Kalamazoo River.



Winter scene of the Comstock Falls in 1930.

Another attractive feature of this pond is the small flock of Mute Swans which make this their home from April through October of each year. First introduced in 1969, these young male swans feed on algae and duckweed. These weeds if left unchecked soon cover pond waters with a greenish scum. It has been proven that the swans do an effective job in keeping the pond clean. In addition they add their own beauty and grace.

THOMAS MERRILL PARK

This is the oldest recreation area in continuous use in Comstock Township. In the early 1900's it was used as a pasture lot baseball field. Raymond Slager recalls that he and his brother drove a herd of cows down River Street and pastured them in this field. At night the boys took the cows back to the farm for the evening milking. In those days the ball players cleared out brush and grass to play the game, their only spectators the grazing cows.

Older residents of Comstock recall that this area always flooded over every spring. The oily flood waters covered the land up to Comstock Avenue. It wasn't until the Morrow Dam was built in the late 1930's that improved flood control measures began.

When first acquired in 1939, the area was known as "Baseball Park." Local merchants sponsored a number teams. Among them were Bell's Greenhouses, Jones' Pure Oil Station, Portenga & Slager Lumber Co., Reed's Grocery and Whitney's Barber Shop. In addition free movies were offered by local merchants.



Flood scene in 1942. View shows height of river at high water peak. Building housed the Ritz Cleaners, located east of Merrill Park.

The first lighting for the baseball field was installed in 1947. At the same time the first playground equipment was erected. The present Park Building was built in March, 1953 for a sum of \$6,500.00.

On Sept. 28, 1958 the Park's name was officially changed to that of THOMAS MERRILL PARK. Research conducted by Nelson Ellwood, former Comstock Township Clerk, showed that the first church built in Comstock Township was that of Rev. Thomas Merrill, a Baptist minister. The church was supposedly located on the site of the present Park. This was during the period between 1835-1845.

The Comstock Civic Improvement League was in charge of the Park dedication. Roy Carpenter and Warren Milham represented the League, C. Dale Reed spoke for the local Optimist Club and Frank Molenaar represented the Comstock Park Commission. Featured speaker was Raymond Hightower of Kalamazoo College. Approximately 200 local citizens attended the ceremonies.



Dedication of Thomas Merrill Park on Sept. 28, 1958. Shown are Mr. Warren Milham, Civic League member, C. Dale Reed, Optimist Club President, Frank Molenaar, Park Commissioner and Mr. Roy Carpenter, Civic League member.

Today this Park is the focal point for many of Comstock's public activities. The ball diamond is now considered one of the finest in our area. The lighting system was completely renovated during 1975, making night ball games more popular than ever. Plans are now under way to build a picnic shelter near the Kalamazoo River; also a tennis court off the parking lot.

ROBERT MORRIS PARK

This is the largest and newest of Comstock Township Parks. Comprising 40 acres of rolling countryside on the shores of Campbell Lake, it was dedicated on May 30, 1968 and named Campbell Lake Park.

Negotiations to purchase the land from Ed Fry, who operated it as Fry's Landing, began in May, 1967. Robert Morris, Township Supervisor at the time, along with S.K. Harrington and Alfred Madden of the Park Commission, worked out the financial arrangements. The entire area including residence and buildings cost the Township \$75,000.

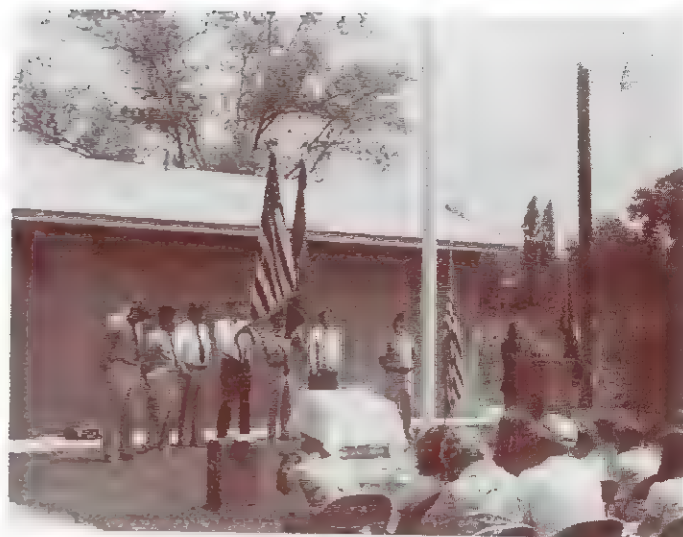


Parks entrance sign on East H Ave.

Alex Forrester served as the first Park Manager while major improvements were being made. A new entrance road was built. Later a new bath house and picnic shelter were constructed.

Greg Mauchmar is the present Park Manager. During his service additional improvements have taken place. The beach has been enlarged and a new swimming dock created. A paved parking lot built to accommodate at least 200 cars is a recent addition.

The park was again renamed on May 24, 1975. Mr. Morris had passed away in Sept. 1974, and it was agreed that this part should be a lasting memorial to him. Dedication ceremonies were held in the park. Rev. Wilbur Courter gave the main address, speaking before a crowd estimated at 250 persons. Others paying tribute were State Senator John Welborn, Township Supervisor Joe Van Bruggen, Father Eugene



Dedication of renaming ceremonies of Robert Morris Park on May 24, 1975. Guest speaker Rev. Wilbur Courter at speaker's podium shown with honor guard and citizens attending.

Sears. Arggle Stevens, Jr., and S.K. Harrington. A new flag was raised by an honor guard from the Comstock VFW Post. A bronze plaque at the base of the new flagpole honors Robert Morris. The Comstock Band played for the assembled crowd.

This is Comstock's most popular park. The clean, sparkling waters of the lake draw hundreds of Comstock's people during the warm summer months. Children are given free swimming lessons. A newly created nature trail offers a place for woodland hikes. Picnic areas, playground equipment, volleyball and horseshoe courts offer recreation for everyone.

PEER PARK

Acquired during 1939 this Park was named for Perry Peer, one of the former owners of the land. At one time the site of the Peer Foundry Company and later the Fry Foundry Company, the land was purchased from the receivers of the latter firm. For many years there was considerable industrial activity here. From the 1880's through the 1920's a large factory, operated by water power from the pond, occupied a large part of the present park area. During the early 1930's Jake Kline Operated a Tool & Die Shop; This was one of the last business firms to occupy the old Fry Foundry Co.

This place was long known as the "lower or first pond." Along with the pond in Cooper Park it was a favorite ice skating rink. Area school children made this a community playground. For many years a wooden walkway under the railroad tracks served as a means of going to and from school.



Student tunnel under railroad and highway, used in the 30's and 40's. The Horace Comstock home at the left in background

An interesting item concerns the use of water power at this factory site. In order to operate the mill, water power from this lower pond was used. When the water level dropped, the flood gate in the Cooper Pond was opened to refill the lower Pond. This operation was performed twice a day while the mills were in operation.

Peer Park owes much of its beauty to its attractive Pond. During the summer months it is the home of three male Mute Swans. Like their brothers in Cooper Pond, these birds help keep the pond clean by eating algae and duckweeds, surface plants which tend to cloud or clutter the surface water.



The graceful swans that inhabit the park waters.

During the summer of 1971, a riprap stone wall was built along the west shore of the Pond. It has done much to stabilize and enhance the beauty of the park.

Many of the trees growing in the park are Arbor Day plantings made by Comstock Scout Troops and school children. Donated trees are given every April to expand the number of colorful trees now growing

here. This park is small but it serves as an invitation to stop, relax and enjoy for a moment a quiet bit of life.



Peer Park Veterans memorial plaque

RECREATION PROGRAMS IN COMSTOCK PARKS

Baseball was the impetus needed to start the present parks in Comstock. Today finds both day and night baseball games being played before large crowds. Facilities include modern nighttime lighting, bleachers, ample parking and rest rooms.

Working through the Parks Commission, Larry Pickett of the Comstock Public Schools served as the first Parks Recreation Director. Today, under the direction of Larry Dopp, an enlarged summer recreation program is offered in the parks for a period of 6 weeks. Games, crafts and movies are held in the Merrill Park building. Baseball, archery, volleyball, croquet and other games are offered. Approved life guards teach swimming at Robert Morris Park. Celery Street Park has an active program during the summer for children living near the park.

An annual Arts & Crafts Show has been held in Merrill Park during the past two seasons. First started by Pearl Vasher of the Parks Commission, the Art Show attracts craftsmen from all over Southern Michigan. Booths are provided to display assorted handiwork. In a summertime setting of shade trees and spacious lawns, the Show is both colorful and a popular feature.

Comstock Community Days are another annual event. Usually held during July in Merrill Park, local clubs set up booths to display local wares. A carnival-like atmosphere brings hundreds of local people to the day-long event.



Annual art show in Merrill Park.



One of the Community Days festivities held in Merrill Park.



This Arbor Day event was sponsored by the Comstock Bi-Centennial Committee and are present in photo. The April 22, 1976 Thursday afternoon was warm and sunny, really perfect for the occasion.

NATURAL HISTORY OF COMSTOCK PARKS

The first survey of trees growing in Comstock Parks was made in Aug. 1959. At that time a total of 256 trees made up the Park's woodlands. American or White Elms made up 71 of this total. Today none exist, victims of Dutch Elm Disease. Silver Maples accounted for the second most abundant trees, tallying 59 specimens. They remain the most common park tree today. Most are found in the rich, alluvial soil along our river, creek and ponds.

White Ash is fairly common, accounting for 27. Other important trees include Pin Oaks, Hackberry, Sycamore, Sugar Maple, Basswood, Honey Locust, Black Walnut, Sweet Gum, Norway Maple, Douglas Fir, Colorado Spruce and Washington Hawthorn.

Uncommon trees include Bitternut Hickory, Swamp White Oak and Chinquapin Oak. In the flood plain along the Kalamazoo River a number of Redbud trees make their home. These are among most colorful springtime flowering trees.

Over the past 16 years the Park and Recreation Commission has held an annual Arbor Day tree planting program. Held the last Friday in April students and scout groups take part in planting a tree in each of the parks. Today many fine young trees are growing as a result of this program.

Comstock's wooded parks and waterways offer an ideal home for numerous birds and wild flowers. The Rose-Breasted Grosbeak and Warbling Vireo find a home in Merrill Park. Along the nearby Kalamazoo River the Spotted Sandpiper, Green Heron and wild Mallard Ducks can be seen. In winter the American Golden-Eye or Whistler Duck can often be seen bobbing among the ice floes. Both Cooper and Peer Ponds have their bank and tree swallows along with a Belted Kingfisher rattling overhead. Among the wild flowers the tiny rue anemone and wild ginger cover the ground in early spring in the River Parks. Robert Morris Park offers an ideal nature area. The lake, pond, marshy area and upland offer interesting exploring ground for the naturalist.

Thanks is acknowledged to the following persons who contributed historical information used in this article:

Bell, James and Margaret	Slager, Raymond
Carpenter, Roy	Van Bruggen, Joe
Elwood, Maude	Vose, Olive
Reed, C. Dale and Karla	Wenke, Chris
Westrate, Eleanor	

Thanks also to Maris Owens of the Comstock Public Library for additional information and assistance. The writer has also referred to his records of 22 years compiled while serving with the Parks Commission.

DID YOU KNOW?

The toll charges for the use of the first ferry across the Kalamazoo River (location of the bridge where Kings Highway meets Michigan Ave.) were:

Two horses and wagon - 25¢
 Each additional horse - 6¼¢
 One yoke of oxen - 25¢
 One person and horse - 12½¢
 Each foot passenger - 6¼¢

CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS



The South Comstock Ladies Library Association entertained at luncheon Wednesday afternoon honoring Miss Estelle Ranney, left, and Mrs. Jennie Gray Eaves, right, charter members of the organization which was formed in 1885. Twenty-one members attended the luncheon in the Pioneer Tea room.

SOUTH COMSTOCK LADIES LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

The first meeting was held September 5, 1885 in South Comstock. The charter roster contained the names of twelve prominent pioneer women of the township and voted to be known as the South Comstock Library Society.

The first election was December 1, 1888, with Mrs. Belle Carlton as President, Vice President was Mrs. J.H. Norris, and Secretary and Treasurer was Mrs. Nellie Hill. Aside from being a social nature, the object of the group was to provide the community with good reading material. Miss Emma Hill was the first librarian.

Money was raised by box socials, quilting bees, food sales and various other activities. They started with 400 books and added to them each year. In 1936 they had a library of nearly 700 volumes. In 1956 they donated all the books to the present

Comstock Township Library and continued meeting as a social club. On May 13, 1956 they celebrated their 70th anniversary with a dinner at Chicken Charlie's. They are said to be the oldest club in the Federation of Women's Clubs in Kalamazoo County.

LIONS CLUB

The Lions Club was chartered in 1970. The first officers were: Ray Page, President; Charlie McGuire, Vice President; Stanley Snow, Treasurer, Mack Lewis, Secretary; Gil Sigro, Tail Twister. They have a distinguished record of service in Comstock and surrounding area. Major projects are Aid to the Blind, Little League, Track Meets, Community Center, Cancer Clinic, and many other needs of the community.

Present officers are: Mainord Weaver, President; Howard Ewles, Vice President; Rog Wagonmaker, Secretary; and Ernie Stafford, Treasurer.

JAY-CEES

The newly formed (April 21, 1961) Junior Chamber of Commerce of Comstock are a group of young men 18-35 years old who believe they can best learn leadership by community involvement, in aiding and carrying through projects that improve the area. Their first project was to inform the residents of the township the facts of the community water issue.

The first President of the Jay-Cees was Kenneth Alpers; Vice President David Sans; 2nd Vice President, Rodney Leversee; Secretary, Donald Kaminga; and Eugene Vining, Treasurer. The current president is Bruce Mason.

CIVIC IMPROVEMENT LEAGUE

On October 13, 1905, about 125 Comstock residents met at the home of Mr. and Mrs. J.H. Pond (the present Doud home) and organized "The Civic Improvement League." Present besides Comstock people were Rev. Bartlett Crane and Kalamazoo Mayor W.C. Taylor.

Purpose of the League was to cultivate public sentiment in favor of improving and beautifying the homes, streets, and surroundings of Comstock and to endeavor to promote in every legitimate manner the development of the whole community.

Officers elected were:

President — Mr. G.H. Norris

Vice President — W.W. Baldwin

Treasurer — L.A. Mason

Committee Members: Mr. E.P. Montague, Mrs. J.H. Norris, W.E. Boyd, W.W. Baldwin, E.M. Botsford, and O.G. Loveland.

Membership fee was 25¢ per year. The receipts for this first banquet were \$20 or \$25 to be applied in purchasing street lamps. One of the first street lamps is still in use near the water falls at Cooper Park.

The League has sponsored many worthy projects such as the first Fire Department. The church bell was used to call out the volunteers.

Suppers, bazaars, minstrel shows and other activities have aided in our having a Fire Department, cement bridge over the river in 1939, street lights, besides always being a help to needy families, boy and girl scout activities, and also a Liberty Bond drive in wartime.

The Roy Carpenters came here in 1924 and joined the Civic Improvement League. He said they put sidewalks in front of the school and from River Street to the Methodist Church on Kings Highway.

In the middle 1960's some older members had died or moved away, other clubs sprung up and the Civic Improvement League dissolved.

These members will always be affectionately remembered for their inspiring guidance in this community.



Picture included in Comstock Township Board minutes of Sept. 4, 1934 to aid in request for funds to replace bridge. Shown in photo are "Judge" Spear on left and Warren Milham on right. The old iron bridge had served its usefulness and was of great concern at the time.



'CLEANUP DAY' AT COMSTOCK 50 YEARS AGO: ONLY FEW IN PICTURE ARE LIVING TODAY

(On Ground in Foreground), Charles Mitchell, Berniece Allen Thorne; (Second Row), Mable Woodhouse Bullard, Anna Wright Montague, Doris Notley, Dorothy Huff, LaVern Warfield, Jane Young, Beth Allen Bunting, Gertrude Mason Gilskey, Roy Haner, Paul Nutton, Don Nutton; (Third Row), Mrs. Jacob Miller, Mrs. S. H. Hopping, Mrs. Josiah (Aunt) Loveland, Henry Hale, Mrs. A. M. Nutton, Mrs. William Hobart, W. W. Baldwin, Mrs. Hill, Daniel Hopping, Mrs. Orson Loveland, Dr. E. R. Swift, Mrs. George Warfield, a guest, Mrs. Ward Miller, Mrs. George Allen, S. H. Hopping; (Standing), A. M. Nutton, (Superintendent of Schools) J. Harry McCormick, Silas A. Wright, John Notley, Ed Day, William Hobart, Charles H. Barnes, Jacob Miller, David Clark, Ben Miller, George Woodhouse, Perry A. Peer, Ernest Botsford, William Hadley, unidentified, George Mitchell and Mr. Hill.

Civic Improvement was uppermost concern of citizens way back then.



Members of the C.D.F. Club which was formed in 1931.

ODDFELLOWS AND REBECCA'S

The Oddfellows and Rebecca's were chartered about 1907 at Galesburg. The first members were O.J. Loveland, Jake Miller, J. Norris, Dan Hopping, Charlie White, George Woodhouse, and W.W. Baldwin.

Later they located in the present Oddfellows Hall in Comstock. They celebrated burning their mortgage in September 1961.

They first participated in Fire Relief, sitting up nights with sick people, rescue work, furnishing crutches for the lame, etc.

Through the years they have worked unfailingly to aid the Eye Bank, Cancer and Heart research, Veterans cookies, and many other worthwhile projects to aid the home and community.



Comstock Rebekah Degree Team taken May 28, 1944

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #6252

The Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #6252 was instituted on March 10, 1946. The newly formed post had its first Post Home at 491 West Michigan Avenue. The first elected commander of the post was Ralph O. Birkhold. In its first year, the post, under the leadership of Commander Birkhold grew from a few members to nearly five hundred. V.F.W. Post #6252 was also responsible for a unified Buddy Poppy sale between all the posts in Kalamazoo in 1946. In September, 1946, a Ladies Auxiliary to the post was formed, and an October 21 was instituted. The Auxiliaries first President elect was Mrs. Vera Hoogendoorn.

By 1947, Post #6252 and its Auxiliary were throwing their first hospital party for recuperating soldiers from the Gull Lake Annex of the Percy Jones Hospital. The Post also was able to set up an educational program in the Kalamazoo area. On June 21, 1948, the Post held a special ceremony to dedicate their new Post colors. In August 1950 the Post and its Auxiliary were happy to be able to help in hosting four European teen-age war orphans on a visit to Kalamazoo.

In 1952 V.F.W. Post #6252 purchased the business block at 1214-1216 East Michigan Avenue for a new Post Home. In 1953 V.F.W. Post #6252 aided in the preliminary planning for the welcoming home of a Korean War POW from Kalamazoo. In 1955, V.F.W. Post #6252 was joined by Post #4098, which was later absorbed by #6252. Also, in 1955, Post #6252 received awards for placing ninth among two hundred posts for service to the community. Again in 1959 Post #6252 absorbed another post, Post #8277.

In 1965, V.F.W. Post #6252 moved from the foot of East Main Hill to 5520 East Michigan in Comstock, and became the Comstock V.F.W. Post.

Community services filled by Post #6252 are that of sponsoring a little League baseball team. The sponsoring of the Voice of Democracy Program at Comstock High School. Post #6252 aids needy families in the area, and puts together and distributes Christmas Baskets of food at Christmas time to the less fortunate in the community. The Post also makes donations to many community projects throughout the year. The Post at regular intervals travels to the V.A. Hospital at Fort Custer and throws hospital parties for the veterans who are patients there. At this time the V.F.W. Post #6252 is in the process of opening a park in Comstock which is dedicated to all the veterans from the area.

In this our Bicentennial year, Post #6252 was very happy to sponsor Patrick Stafford, from Comstock High School, in the Voice of Democracy Program. Patrick was the state winner in the program, and

traveled to Washington D.C. to compete in national.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars Post #6252 has grown in numbers and strength since it has moved to Comstock. The Post now has a Ladies Auxiliary, a Dads of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post, and a Junior Girls Unit. Post #6252 has worked to serve the community, and will strive in the future to serve the community more.

Ladies Auxiliary to VFW Post 6252

The Auxiliary to the Veterans of Foreign Wars, is a service organization made up of wives, widows, mothers, sisters, grandmothers and granddaughters of men and women who have served with the armed forces in foreign countries during time of war.

As a national organization, the Auxiliary was instituted in 1914. Our own Auxiliary was instituted in 1947. The Post home, at that time, was on East Michigan Avenue, at the corner of East Main Street. There were twenty-three charter members. Since that time, the Auxiliary to Post 4098 merged with us in 1957 and in 1960. Auxiliary 8277 consolidated with us.

It was in 1966, we moved to our present address, at 5520 East Michigan Avenue, in Comstock. We have four of our charter members who are active in Auxiliary work and we have 80 members.

Our objective, as a service organization, is to help insure national security through maximum military strength; to speed rehabilitation of the nation's disabled and needy veterans; to assist the widows and orphans and dependents of those veterans; and to promote americanism in patriotism and constructive service to the communities in which we live.

We are a working organization, not a social order.

DID YOU KNOW?

Horace Comstock's son, "Medicine Bill" Comstock served with General George Custer during the Seventh Calvary's Tenderfoot Campaign in Kansas. The next year he was chosen as the Chief of Four Scouts charged with informing General Sheridan about the moves and moods of the hostile plains tribes. At 26 years of age, he met death at the hands of the Indians he knew as well as any man on the frontier.

How would you like to pay only \$1.00 for a cord of wood? That's what it cost a little over 44 years ago. Talk about inflation, well here's a good place to start.

MANUFACTURING

Human nature repeats itself in invention. In the early days of Comstock, very few mechanics were here so each settler had to develop his own skills. Good mechanics came in with the little Colony at Comstock Village in 1831. Leland Lane, the Cooker, Jesse and Martin Turner and Charles Whitcomb, three good machinists came.



This is the oldest known picture of a manufacturing building. The barn building on left is believed to be a tannery. Making items necessary for belts, shoes, harnesses, etc., used by other businesses and people. Looking northwest.

The early settlers who came to this region years ago lay their wheat sheaves on a floor made of smooth earth and drove their oxen over it to trample out the grain, just as people did 3000 years ago. The cradle and sickle were used and sometimes a flail to get out grain. For separating the grain from the chaff, the old hand fan was first used; and if there was no breeze, some would take a sheet or blanket and a man at each end would raise the wind by flapping it.

The first machine used for threshing in this township was called the "English Beater." Cross bars made of wood beat the grain as it came through rollers in the machine. Alpha Tubbs brought the first modern threshing machine into this region.

In 1831, Judge Caleb Eldred built the first saw mill on the bank of the stream running through what was later to be known as Comstock. This mill was of great service to the entire region around it. Hiram Moore and E.A. Jackson built in the spring of 1832 another saw mill at the site of the present first pond waterfall, which later was the site of the Peer Novelty Manufacturing Works. Many other saw mills were

built in the Township including one at the former site of the third pond and one on the north side of the river at the end of present Rosemont Street.

The first Grist mill was built at the site of the second pond water fall in 1832 by Horace Comstock, Samuel Percival, and Caleb Eldred. It was enlarged several times under different owners to accommodate the flouring of a great deal of wheat for the Eastern and Western Markets, besides doing a large custom work in the area. Previous to this, the settlers went to the Vicksburg or Flowerfield mill which took much time in travel. At one time, there were other mills along this fast flowing stream.

In 1848, Montgomery Percival erected a fulling mill north of the first pond water fall. He used it for cording wool and cloth dressing for a year or two, and then turned it into a grist mill. This burned, and the Novelty Works of Perry Peer arose from the ashes of the mill, but very soon this, too, burned.

Frank Clark built a saw mill in the vicinity of Galesburg. This was the first one in this vicinity to be driven by steam power. This was used to saw plank lumber for a proposed plank road between Comstock and Galesburg that was never built. Later this steam power was used for the manufacture of chairs and bedsteads. Soon after, a Mr. Burdick used the same power and the building for the manufacture of staves.



This shows the building that housed the Comstock Novelty Works. Picture taken about 1890. Business operated by the Peer family. You are looking northwest from the MC Railroad tracks.

In the early 1870's Perry Peer and his family came to Comstock from England, locating their home east of the water fall on the present Worden Street site. With a capital of \$4,000, and producing goods valued

at \$28,000, and sometimes employing 8 hands, he built a small factory known as the Peer Novelty Works. They were known throughout the locality for their superior ornamental iron and brass products. Some are to be found in the fencing at the Comstock Cemetery.



Workers have just finished loading a horizontal steam engine on a flat car at the Comstock Manufacturing Company.

Later on, Mr. Peer added to his present building to start the Comstock Manufacturing Company, which made Kimbal Steam Engines, which were made in sizes from 2 to 45 horse power. In 1898, they shipped a carload of engines to Mexico, and worked evenings to keep up with their orders. The Comstock Manufacturing Company enlarged its office and prepared to do a more extensive business. Large shipments of these engines were sent to Dallas, Texas, Honolulu, Brussels, Belgium, Norway, and Russia. They put in a new water wheel and repaired the dam. (An early clipping from a Kalamazoo Paper recorded this interesting account.)



This shows the interior view of the Comstock Manufacturing Company. They made parts for the steam engine. Located on the site of the present Peer Park.

By invitation of Perry Peer, the genial secretary of the Comstock Manufacturing Company, we had the pleasure of seeing the many improvements, which the Company has lately made in its valuable plant. We were first taken to the basement to see the working of the new water wheel. By taking a half turn on the lever that opens the gate, to let in the water on the wheel, all of the machinery was started. Everything runs in such smooth motion that it is musical to listen.

The gas plant that produces the light which illuminates the room above is also located in this story. A large boiler is found here which warms the whole plant and produces steam for testing the new engines. Everything seemed to be in perfect order.

On the next floor the machinery is found in a large room 60 by 100 ft. The room is well lighted by plenty of windows. The machines are in the west end, thus leaving the east part for storage and finishing up the products. The Company is shipping the engines to all parts of the world. The offices are also found on this floor. The castings are made in their own foundry, which joins the machine room on the north. At present, 20 hands are employed and kept very busy. Of late, they have had to work evenings to keep up orders. They turn out about 25 engines per month. There was a shipment of 9 engines to Russia and 4 engines to Santiago, Chili last week.

Another clipping tells of one of the first industrial accidents. Young Frank Wright, who was just seventeen was instantly killed in the basement of the Manufacturing Company. His clothing was caught in one of the shafts that was revolving more than 100 revolutions per minute. His remains were removed to his fathers house. No event that has occurred for years has cast so deep a gloom over the whole community as did this tragedy.

It was the only recorded manufacturing from a period of 1873 to about 1915.

In around 1892, a Mr. Ranney patented a celery hiller that attracted much attention. It seemed to be just the thing for banking up the dirt around the celery. At this time, celery began to be one of Comstocks leading agricultural exports. No research has turned up where it was made.

A conversation with Mr. Walter Miller who resides in Comstock at the present time proved that the normal wage at the Novelty Company was .10 or 15¢ an hour for a machinest or about \$6 per week.

The Gates Manufacturing Company was another early step in the progress of Comstock. It was built by George Gates. The present block building on King Highway was built about 1911.

Mr. Gates was a printer by trade and also an inventor. Among the better known patents of which



This is the Gates Manufacturing building, looking from the Gates Park along the Kalamazoo River. Gates was an excellent book binder and manufactured sales book covers.

he held many were, the Gates Clip – a metal device attached to the top of Salesbooks, which he also made the covers for. Another trade he was noted for was special book binding. Many of the older books for the County of Kalamazoo were done by him, also for individuals and for the Kalamazoo Public Library.

He established one of the first parks on the Kalamazoo River known as the Gates Park, which was used for picnics and swimming by young and old. He was a man of many talents and hobbies.

Although the "Rendering Works," as it was called in the early days of 1900, located on East Main near our present Compactor site, was sometimes referred to as a blight to the community, it played a very important part in the history of manufacturing in Comstock. It was started by four Dutchmen as a processor of dead stock. Animals were rendered here and the by-products used for many purposes. Tallow and grease tankage so obtained were used in the manufacture of some of the finest soaps.

Not long after it had started the operation, it was purchased by a Mr. W. Lawrence who expanded it and processed chemicals for use in the paper industry. Just before the second world war, four men from Hercules Powder Company took it over and operated it. The by-products used in the manufacturing of black powder and explosives were much in demand in both wars, and it had a work force of about 38 men at one time.

After about 1945, when detergents replaced soap as a cleaner, business dwindled. Dead stock, which the company depended on for rendering, also became scarce and the only source of raw material was from meat markets and super markets. This material was

ground and made into animal feed, etc. Little by little it was phased out as a company and closed in 1970. A new residential plat is now planned for the property.

W.T. Davis, who lived on the east bank of the third pond on J.K. Avenue, was another one of our early inventors from about 1910 to 1934. He was one of the first men to manufacture a centrifugal water pump in this area. He had his own machine shop where he also did custom work. Some of his pumps were powered by water force, gasoline engine and later by electric motor. A few are still around today. Mr. Davis was recognized as a top machinist.

Blaisdell Specialties were one of the largest employers from about 1945 to 1956. About 100 people were employed in the manufacturing of camera and projector cases for the Argus Camera Company. They bought the salesbook and metal klik from the Gates family, which they carried on in conjunction with the Argus Contract. One of the Blaisdell boys still continues the manufacture of covers and clips in his home on Parcom Street.

Castle Cupboards next occupied this building and manufactured kitchen specialties and fine cupboard work. They employed about 35. The building now houses the Kalamazoo Amusement Company on King Highway.

CELERY

Celery was first introduced to the people of Kalamazoo County around 1857. A man named Jacob DeBruin found a celery plant in what was supposed to be a parsley bed. He asked his neighbor from whose land he noticed this plant, if he might have it and grow seed. The following year, celery was introduced to people having a banquet in the Burdick House. They liked it and great curiosity was shown at this unknown article.



Celery being loaded for express shipment to eastern metropolitan areas. Note the interurban waiting for passengers.

In the ensuing years, celery became a well-known Comstock product. W.W. Baldwin was the first man to engage in the shipping of celery from this village. Mr. E.P. Montague then took over the operation and began to expand the business. It is interesting to note that Mr. Montague was a man of various talents. He was the American Express Agent for many years. Besides that, he was responsible for the shipping of celery from the celery house at Comstock. He manufactured his own crates and sold them to others as far away as Paw Paw and Decatur. Many people still residing in Comstock remember the platforms on both sides of the tracks at 26th Street, where shipments of Sonny Boy Brand Celery were loaded on large express carts to be taken to Detroit or Chicago.



Comstock people packaging Comstock celery for shipping by express train.

Mr. Montague employed many people in the celery house, packing celery from early morning when the first load was brought in, until the days supply was packed and ready for shipment. Growers hauled their celery from south Comstock by horse and wagon, then later by trucks.

A crew was kept busy all summer "nailing" crates. Ice for packing celery was a winter project. It was sawed from ice on the first pond and stored in an ice house.

Mr. Montague continued a grocery store in the front of the building on 26th Street, but in 1925 went to Florida to engage in his own celery business. He returned each summer to his shipping business in Comstock. Celery was shipped in large refrigerated railroad cars and later refrigerated trucks. He continued his business until the early 1930's. Many have expressed their desire for that good old Comstock Celery as it used to be.

The Rex Paper Mill located at the west edge of the village was started in 1915 by John King. He was well known in paper circles in the early Kalamazoo

and Otsego area and was regarded in the front rank as a paper manufacturer. The Rex Mill at its start and for seven years afterward had the benefit of his broad experience. Mr. King developed the first successful folding enamel papers later known as Rex fold. This mill produced some of the finest book papers anywhere. Many Comstock residents were employed here. Improvements were continued in building and equipment and the mill forged ahead until it was bought by other interests and closed. It had about 140 employees and was one of the first industries in the greater Kalamazoo area to provide bus service for its employees. This bus was also made available to any church, Boy Scout or service organization on Saturdays and Sundays when the mill was not running.



The sorting room of the Rex Paper Company. Do you recognize anyone? A very up-to-date structure for the early 1900's.

Through the years, from the 30's to the present, many businesses have come and gone in our community. Those of the individual carpenter to the vast auto factory have and are contributing to life in Comstock.

The following is a very interesting list of occupations.

A DIRECTORY LIST - 1878

W.W. Baldwin	- General Store & Boarding House
George Allen	- Farmer
Eli Anderson	- Farmer
Edwin Anderson	- Painter
Stephen Barnes	- Machinist
W.M. Beach	- Moulder
Howard Brown	- Machinist
Henry Brown	- Miller
G.E. Dunbar & Co.	- Merchant Millers
J.J. Dunbar	- Teamster
Fisher & Loveland	- Custom Millers
Wm. French	- Shoemaker
Josiah Loveland	- Postmaster

Orson Loveland	- Freight Agent & Telegraph Operator — M.C.R.R.
Mason Lee	- Moulder
James Montague	- Painter
Geo. Peer	- Machinist
Perry Peer	- Novelty Works
Alexander Price	- Cooper (Barrels & staves casks)
Phineas Smith	- Carpenter
R.B. Wallace	- Blacksmith
Rev. White	- Pastor M.E. Church
Gilman White	- Carpenter



Employees of the Rex Paper Company in the 1920's.

DID YOU KNOW?

The first declaration in this county of foreign born citizen of his intention to become a citizen of the U.S. was filed by Richard Knight, a native of Queen's County, Ireland and was processed by the Circuit Court held in Kalamazoo on Nov. 18, 1835.

There were excursion boats on the Kalamazoo River that came up to Gates Park in Comstock.

Comstock had a tornado on Monday, August 8, 1939 on the south side of the river. One person was killed and scores of others injured and many houses were destroyed or heavily damaged.

For years, as a freshman initiation, there was an annual tug of war between the freshmen and sophomore boys. At first it was held across the Kalamazoo River between the interurban bridge and the steel bridge. Later it was held at the first pond because it was thought that the river was too dangerous.

Leonard Bell was neither absent nor tardy in the nine years that he attended the Comstock School, end of 1923 thru 1933.

During a meeting at the Odd Fellow Hall held on the second floor the floor began to settle. Everyone evacuated the building and went to the Methodist Church on Kings Highway to finish the meeting. This event happened in the late 1920's.

A rifle range located on L Ave. (Tunier Road) was used during World War I and afterwards by the Michigan National Guard for nearly 25 years. Also used by the Kalamazoo police department and the National Rifle Association, Kalamazoo chapter.

In Nov. 1975 there were 3,219 students enrolled in the Comstock Schools.

DOCTORS

Dr. Samuel Snyder, age 74, resident and practicing physician in Comstock for several years, died August 16, 1932 while addressing a family reunion at Milham Park. He was one of the oldest members of the Academy of Medicine. born 1857 – Died 1932.



Dr. S.B. Snyder, 74, Comstock, who dropped dead while addressing a Synder family reunion at Milham park Saturday, was to be buried Tuesday at Fulton. Dr. Snyder was one of the oldest practicing physicians in Southern Michigan and among the oldest members of the Academy of Medicine. One of the pall bearers will be Dr. Homer Stryker, Kalamazoo, at whose birth Dr. Snyder was the physician.



Dr. Snyder's house on west side of River Street. (Best service station is there now).

Dr. Thomas Schrier practiced medicine in Comstock for about thirty years. He was born June 25, 1905 and was a graduate of Kalamazoo College and the University of Michigan Medical School.

A Captain in the U.S. Army during World War II, Dr. Schrier served in North Africa and Europe for four years.

He was on the staff of both Borgess and Bronson Hospitals. Dr. Schrier died in Borgess Hospital September 7, 1968.



Dr. Thomas Schrier, Comstock, has received his appointment as a captain in the medical department, United States Army, and will leave Aug. 12 for Fort Lewis, Wash., to report for active duty. He has been a practicing physician in Kalamazoo and Comstock for the last 10 years. — Gazette photo.



Dr. John M. Jennings, age 73 and residing on Comstock Ave. 'Doc' came to Comstock in 1932 offering his service to the youth as well as his patients. Also a good friend in need and deed to our fire department for years.

Dr. John Maxwell Jennings practiced in Comstock from 1932 to 1972 when he went into semi-retirement. He devoted much of his time, talents and experience through those years to the High School athletic events, assisting as an attending doctor.

DID YOU KNOW?

As the early immigrant approached this region, his steps were arrested by its beauty. Here was heavy timberland. Here were the oak openings and burr-oak lands almost ready for the plow — a matchless prairie.

In 1829 Isaac Toland left Ypsilanti and discovered this beautiful region then untouched by civilization. The history of Comstock begins with the settling of Isaac Toland.

In 1831 Toland sold his land to Roswell Ransom and Cyrus Lovell.

Ralph Tuttle came to Toland Prairie in May, 1830. He told of the hardships of pioneer life — going 50 miles to get milling done and 20 miles to sharpen a plowshare.

At one time Comstock was considered as the site for Kalamazoo College.

The first marriage in Comstock Township was Ruel Star to Phebe Eldred on December 29, 1833 by Reverend T.W. Merrill.

The first threshing machine in this township was the "English Beater" introduced by Ziba Smith.

In 1831 Judge Caleb Eldred built the first saw mill in this area.

The old Comstock Mill was built in 1832 by Samuel Percival and was the first flour mill west of Pontiac.

An Indian who lived south of Gull Prairie won the friendship of early settlers who gave him a new suit of clothes. He jumped with joy and said "She-mo-ka-man" meaning I am a white man. Hence his name became "Old She-moke."

In 1832 Philip Goodrich came from New York and in 1841 he conceived the idea of converting ashes from burned log heaps into "pearlash" and finally into saleratus (baking soda) by sale of which he greatly increased his land possessions.

PEOPLE, PLACES, MISC. etc.



Mr. Robert G. Kenyon, age 96, Comstock's oldest known living citizen. He still whittles away on animals, birds and other objects, for which he is so well known. Almost daily he takes a long walk, weather permitting of course, to keep his vim and vigor. His collection, those he can manage to keep, is most inspiring and has the admiring collector feeling the



deep appreciation and ardent desire to purchase for his shelf. Mr. Kenyon came to Comstock in 1918 at the tender age of 39. He has spent nearly 58 eventful, conscientious years in our midst. May many more healthful years be your lot, Mr. Kenyon.

Horace Hawkins Comstock (1807-1861)

Among the early settlers in Kalamazoo County who envisioned the establishment of towns and cities was Horace H. Comstock of Cooperstown, N.Y. He was a comparatively young man of 25 years when he first arrived at "The Creek" as the settlement in Comstock was then called. He made extensive purchases of land in the area, mainly for speculative purposes. He built a home, Comstock Manor, which still stands at the corner of Brookview and E. Michigan Ave. He went back to Cooperstown and married Sarah S. Cooper, a niece of the author, James Fenimore Cooper. He gave land for the first school building at The Creek, on condition that the community be named "Comstock." Thereafter he devoted his efforts toward making the village so attractive that it would become the county seat. To this end, he built a warehouse and landing on the river and a storehouse at the mouth of the river in Saugatuck as

he wished to run boats between the two points. He established the first store, trading with the settlers, Indians and the military.

When the village of Bronson (later Kalamazoo) was chosen as the county seat, Comstock was greatly disappointed. However, he made promises to help finance the erection of Kalamazoo's first courthouse and invested \$17,000 in a quarter interest in property in Kalamazoo. In 1837, the year of the Panic, he lost his investment and was unable to keep his promise. He was elected to the State Legislative Council and when Cooper township was organized, he sponsored the name in honor of his wife's uncle, James Fenimore Cooper.

He moved to Kalamazoo where his first wife died, Feb. 15, 1846. There were four children, three girls and a boy, William Averill, born Jan. 17, 1842 who was killed by his captor Indians on the plains of Kansas, Aug. 16, 1886.

Comstock moved to Otsego where he remarried,



Comstock Manor, the impressive home built by Horace H. Comstock in about 1832, as it looks today. Said to be the first frame house constructed in the village of Comstock, Mich., it

was probably visited on occasion by the famed James Fenimore Cooper, great uncle of Will Comstock.

his young wife living only a year. He dispersed his children (one was adopted by a Kalamazoo family), and returned to Cooperstown where he married a third time. This wife died in Ossining, N.Y.

He took up teaching in Ossining, but before he died Mar. 15, 1861, at the age of 54 years he had married a fourth time. He left an estate of only about \$1,000.

James L. Montague was a veteran of the Civil War. He came to Comstock to teach in 1872. He later gave up teaching and became a painter and paper hanger. He was correspondent for the Kalamazoo Gazette. He walked to Kalamazoo and back each week to deliver his news of Comstock.





SMITH CARLTON

Smith Carlton was called Kalamazoo's "Grand Old Man" and final survivor of the Civil War. He was born in New York State on May 3, 1847, and came to Kalamazoo at the age of three. His parents settled on the farm in South Comstock.

At the age of seventeen, he ran away from his farm home and enlisted in the 28th Michigan Infantry and served most of his enlistment in Richmond and North Carolina. He was with Sherman's army on the historic "March through Georgia."

In June, 1869, he was married to Miss Isabel J. Vose and became a farmer and school teacher in his native Comstock Township.

Always an active Methodist, he engaged in many civic activities. He was also Register of Deeds of Kalamazoo County.

Mr. Carlton was Commander of Orcutt Post G.A.R. from 1932 until his death in December 1943.

At age 88, he was seen at the G.A.R. Hall every day taking care of the business affairs of the Post.

He marched in all Memorial Parades and was famous for his delivery of the Gettysburg Address hundreds of times before Kalamazoo audiences. The last time being in May 1943 when he was honored on his 96th birthday by soldiers and men at Fort Custer, Kellogg Field, and Percy Jones Hospitals where his anecdotes of the War of 1861 were punctuated with the highlights of a busy training day of World War II.

Among his dearest friends were the children of the community. Every school child knew him and he knew them. He appeared in school rooms on stated occasions and recited the Gettysburg Address for them.

In December, 1943, he died in Bronson Hospital of injuries received when he was struck by an automobile while presumably walking to his office for the day.

He was an inspiration to thousands, a man whose love of country and fellow man and whose sincere interest in civic well being of his home and the union has inspired hundreds of school children and citizens of Kalamazoo.

Flags were flown at halfmast for three days in tribute to the memory of this soldier, patriot, and citizen.

Smith Carlton is buried in the family lot in Maple Grove Cemetery in South Comstock.

A grandson, Attorney Russell V. Carlton, still resides in the South Comstock Centennial Home.



Wallace W. Baldwin, early citizen of Comstock. He was prominent in community affairs as well as being a staunch business man. His store carried nearly anything one might want or need.

INTERURBANS

The interurban and the great Buffalo Bill Wild West show arrived in Kalamazoo the same day on August 3, 1900. More than 1,000 people rode the cars that day. Some got aboard in Battle Creek, Augusta and Galesburg, then Clickety-clacked to the park on the east side of Portage street, between Washington and Reed avenues in Kalamazoo.

Kalamazoo County witnessed the end of the interurban service in 1929. The landscape in the



Aug. 3, 1900 marked the start of Kalamazoo's electric train era. Michigan Traction Company car rattles over high trestle

near Galesburg. Mainline of Michigan Central Railroad went through hole in center of structure – Kalamazoo Public Museum

country still shows signs of where the interurban ran. Some people said the scariest part of the trip was going over the Galesburg trestle.

The cars were painted a bright orange or a rich dark green. Each interurban had a coal stove in front.

Interurbans on the line were divided into three types. The fliers, which ran straight through from Kalamazoo to Grand Rapids. The limited, which stopped in main cities along the way. And third, the locals, which stopped everywhere to pick up passengers and freight.

This form of transportation played an important role in Comstock Township before the coming of the automobile.

The old interurban depot is still standing at 171 Portage street, which dwarfs the South Comstock station, but both were adequate.

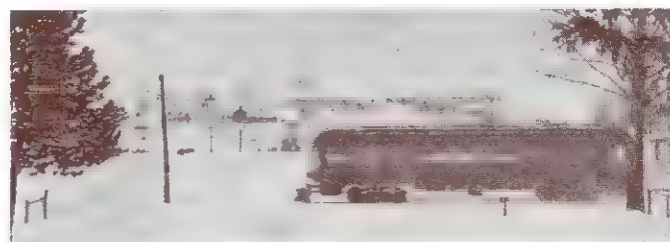


South Comstock interurban station. Gentleman is believed to be Mr. Jackson, (Sr.).

Route traveled along Comstock avenue (Lake Street) and had one of its stops at Fry's.



The Young Switch of the interurban on Comstock Ave. about half way between Comstock and Lakewood in Kalamazoo Township. 1918



The interurban waiting at the 'Fry Stop' on Lake street (Comstock Ave.). It traveled between Kalamazoo and Gull Lake. The James Bell home is in the lower right corner, the Fry sisters living there at the time. The tree in left foreground of photo still stands on corner of Auzba and Comstock Ave. Picture taken in 1913.

One of the most feared sharp curves of the entire line was experienced as the car traveled north on River Street, to an abrupt 90° turn then to run parallel to the Michigan Central railroad tracks going east. Many times if the motorman went too fast it would throw the trolley off the high wire and cause the car to stop. This meant that the motorman had to get outside the car, in all kinds of weather, to put it back on.

This condensed account of the interurban in Comstock affords us a short look at one form of transportation that used to be enjoyed as well as useful.



Interurban approaching the river bridge in the flood of 1908.



Look at that road – no wonder everybody rode interurbans. A typical rural scene of the period; location is unknown.

Comstock Community Center History and Development

In March of 1968, the Comstock Community Center came into being as a Teen Center, under the guidance of many local citizens and Bill Courter, who later became the agency's first director. The setting was a room in an old commercial cleaners building located at 307 South River. The entire building was eventually purchased on September 10, 1969.

The original intent of the many people who first organized the Center was to provide a facility where teens could meet, listen to music, hold dances, talk and develop relationships. The Constitution and By-Laws were signed in June of 1968; the Articles of Incorporation filed on October 1, 1969; and the tax

exempt status was signed May 28, 1970. In November of 1969, Marge Dunham became Director. During her tenure, the agency grew from a rented room to ownership of that building to construction and operation of the current facility at 6330 King Highway. The present building was constructed in the fall of 1973 with a Housing and Urban Development grant, property purchased from the Sisters of St. Joseph, and much local matching money, manpower and time.

From November, 1973 to December 1974, Vernon Jones was the Director. During this period, the agency became Grantee for the County Wide Head Start Program and further expanded its staff and services.

Currently, the Center offers a broad range of Human Services, including a full-time Day Care classroom; transportation; outreach services; counseling; information and referral; a clothing Trading Bar; youth programming, including recreation; home winterization; emergency food and emergency assistance; Well-Child, Family Planning and Dental Clinics; health services through Public Health Nurses; a Senior Citizen Hot Lunch Program, Meals on Wheels and Senior dances.

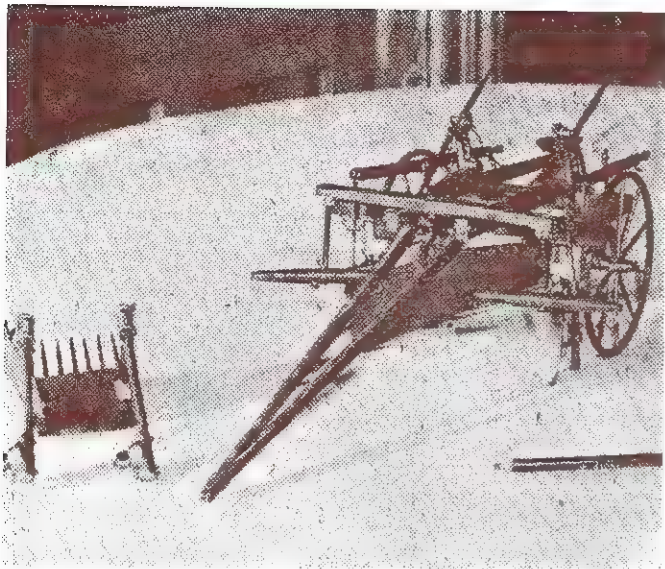
Daniel Kane is now the Director of the Comstock Community Center. The agency is governed by a Board of Director of local township citizens, Charlotte Courter, Chairperson.



Comstock Community Center Building, just off King Hwy., near Villa St. Anthony.

DID YOU KNOW?

If you need someone to do secretarial work it's too bad you weren't around in January of 1936. Secretaries doing a regular work week received the amount of \$15.00 per week.



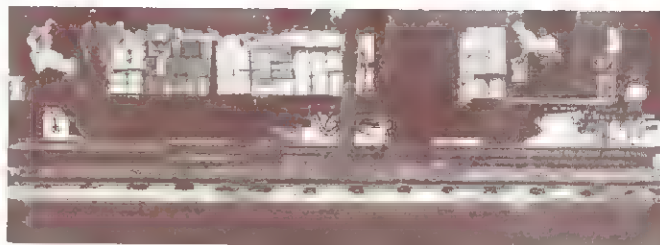
Product of the farm workshop of Maurice M. Ranney during the late '80's, this model of a celery hiller and digger submitted with a patent application was so highly regarded that experts in Washington wanted to know the name of the marker so that he could be given other commissions. The model is now a prized possession of Mr. Ranney's sister, Miss Estella Ranney, who lives on the old homestead south of Comstock.
- Gazette photo.



Howard Montague in the picture advertising Sonny Boy Brand Celery.



Wagons loaded with celery to be packed and shipped. Late 1800's or early 1900's. South side of the Baldwin Building.



Loading celery on the train.



Lower pond after dam had gone out in March, 1889. Mill, foundry, property and dam were destroyed during an enormous ice jam, flood and washout of all waters upstream.



The iron bridge on River Street over the Kalamazoo River. Note the pilings that appear to be supporting the bridge. Actually they support the interurban bridge just beyond (west).



Train wreck in front of St. Anthony's on Monday, July 15, 1912.



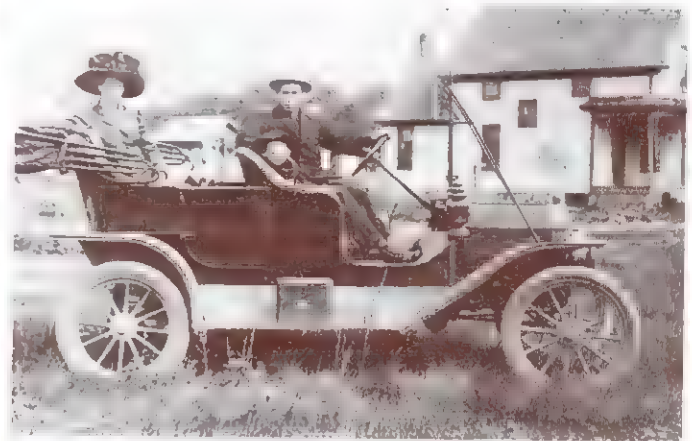
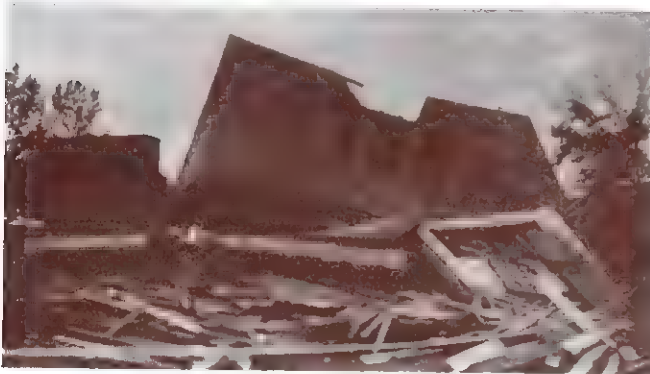
Scene at dedication of Comstock's new bridge in 1939. Here are two scenes pictured during ceremonies at the new Comstock bridge.



Tornado in south Comstock in 1939.



Two Lads – Bob Bellisle fishing in the Kalamazoo River with his dog Lad.



Mr. and Mrs. Carl McQueen and Olin ready for a ride in the "good old days."



Comstock church group on an outing at Gull Lake about 1909.



Tornado in south Comstock in 1939.

DID YOU KNOW?

Gull Prairie Road was an important trail and became a route followed by the pioneers. It was a Potawatomi Indian trail. This is now North 26th street.



River Street looking south. Taken at, or near the intersection of River and Comstock Ave. in 1918.



River Street looking north from the south end of the mucklands. (1918)



Michigan Avenue, Comstock's main street in the early 1900's.



Chubb Street (formerly known as Church Street) showing the livery stable on the left, the Methodist Church at the end of the street and the Odd Fellows Hall.



A view of Comstock looking south from Cemetery Hill. River Street on right side of the picture.



Comstock Village 1900.



This picture was taken on Arbor Day in Cooper Park at the dedication of the red oak bicentennial tree and plaque. The plaque reads:

*This oak tree
Commemorates the
1776-1976
Bicentennial
Comstock Township
April, 1976*

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1838 Comstock was described as a village and post office pleasantly located on the north bank of Kalamazoo River. There was a flour mill, two saw mills, a store, a physician and two lawyers.



Township government in action. An annual town meeting.



It's 56 For 200 – Members of the Comstock Bicentennial Committee spent the best part of Saturday afternoon planting 56 trees of many varieties on River Street, King Highway, 26th Street and at each Comstock school building. In addition to several flowering crabapple trees like the one committee members are putting in the ground in the photo at the left, some sugar maples, red oak, cherry, ash and linden trees were also planted in honor of the nation's 200th year of existence.

— Gazette photo

DID YOU KNOW?

There was an enormous ice jam, flood and wash-out of the dam on the lower pond in March, 1889.



The former home of Beth Allen Bunting. Her parents, George A. and Sarah E. Allen, bought the property in 1883. This house was at 566 North 26th St. and was burned by the Township in 1974. The land is now part of Cooper Park.



The Campbell farm house on North 28th Street. Built in 1862 by John P. Campbell from Scotland. Farm has been in

family for more than 100 years. Four generations lived and farmed the land.



The Campbell home on North 28th Street as it is today.



Auntie Loveland's house just north of the now empty Middle School on 26th St. Then and now.



The Silas Wright home around 1900. This house still stands on the north side of the railroad tracks a little east of the Worden Street crossing.





Perrin Villa in 1910. In 1976 the Robert Doud home on N. 26th Street.



The James Montague home on what is now Worden Street. Three generations of the Montague family in the picture now all deceased. (about 1890) It is now the home of Mabel Bullard (4th generation) and is occupied by her granddaughter (6th generation).



The Castle on Warden Street. This home was built by Archie Peer.



The Horace Comstock house at Brookview and Michigan Ave. as it is today.



The Will Gleason family home as it is today. They were an early pioneer family. The house is located on E. Michigan Ave. in front of the East Elementary School.



Perry Peer home on Worden Street on the west side of the street next to the tracks. (1902)



Old Peer Building shortly before demolition in 1966. The new Comstock Beer Store on the left.



The Dingman home facing Michigan Avenue. Reed's Market parking lot is now at this location.



Villa Saint Anthony

DID YOU KNOW?

A popular immigrant song was:

Come all you Yankee farmers
Who'd like to change your lot
Who've spunk enough to travel
Beyond your native spot,
And leave behind the village
Where pa and ma do stay
Come follow me and settle in
Mich-i-gan-ia.



Building that burned and was replaced by the Peer Building in 1912.



Reed's Market at it's grand opening in 1939.

Four generations of Campbell's have lived on the same farm since 1862 on north 28th street and still reside in the old homestead.



General Motors Corporation, Fisher Body Plant. The most modern metal fabricating plant in the world. It is located on a 400 acre site in the South West corner of our township. Ground was broken for the more than 2 million square foot facility in July, 1964, and production started in Aug. 1965.

At full production, the plant employs 3,000 people. Endless miles of high grade steel are fed through giant presses where they are formed into basic body components for shipment to General Motors assembly operations.

DID YOU KNOW?

News noted in the Kalamazoo Gazette

July 13, 1891 — It took \$9,190.88 to settle the expense of our town last year. The dog tax does not half pay for the sheep killed by dogs the past year.

July 18, 1893 — The pond was struck by lightning. Several saws have been lost while cutting ice and may draw lightning to that location.

July 23, 1891 — Little Mabel Woodhouse swallowed a glove button hook about two inches long, which was 48 hours in traversing the intestinal canal. The anxiety of the parents and friends was greatly relieved when the indigestible article was recovered. The child did not seem to suffer any inconvenience therefrom.

Nov. 17, 1891 — Miss Mabel Baldwin will hold her first reception next Sunday afternoon from 3 to 5 P.M. She will complete five years of life on that day. The invitations are very pretty.

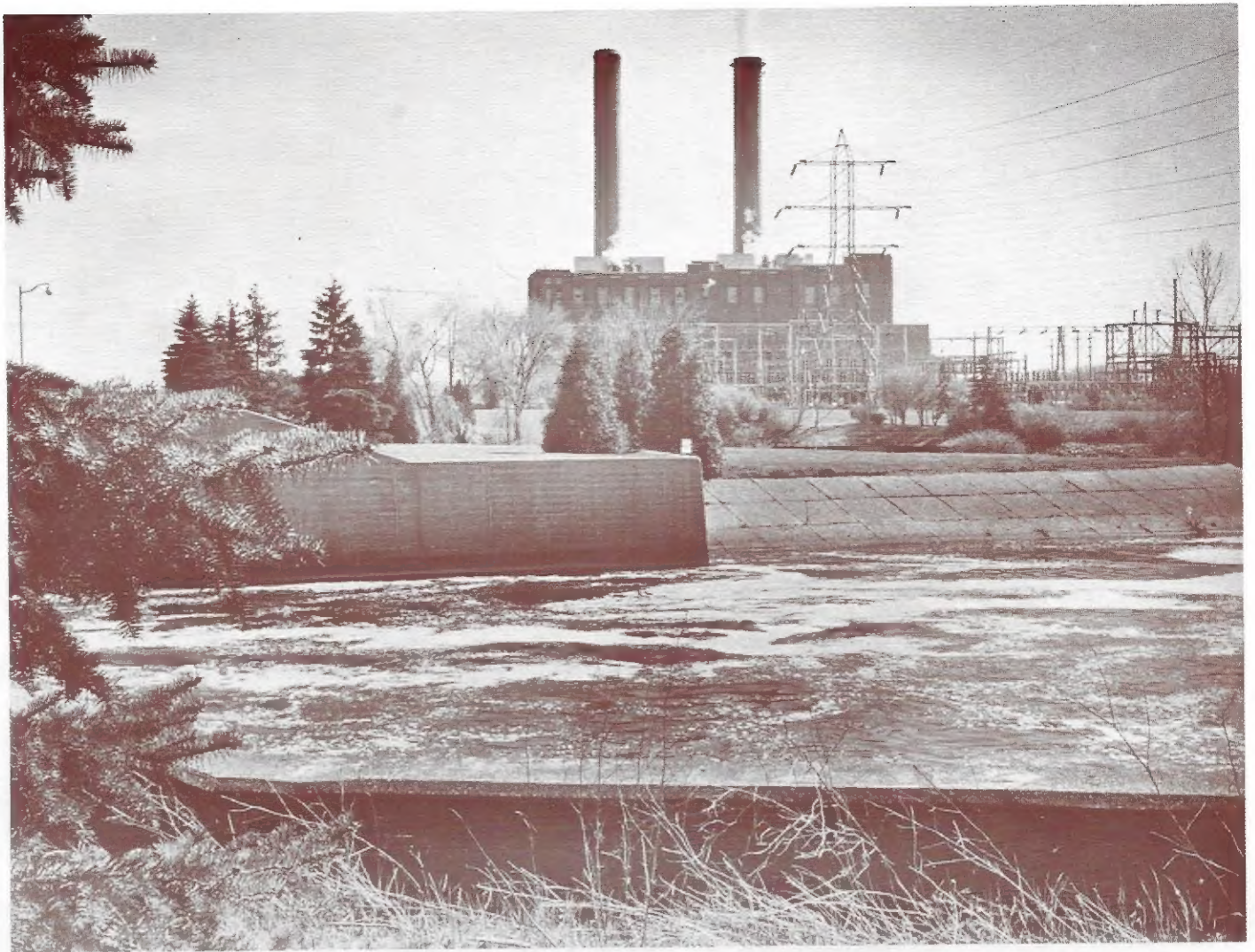
Nov. 1893 — P.A. Peer's cow took a cold bath in a deep hole just below the Fisher and Loveland dam. She slid off the bank while getting a drink.

On April 1, 1901 the ladies of the church gave a dinner at 15¢ each.

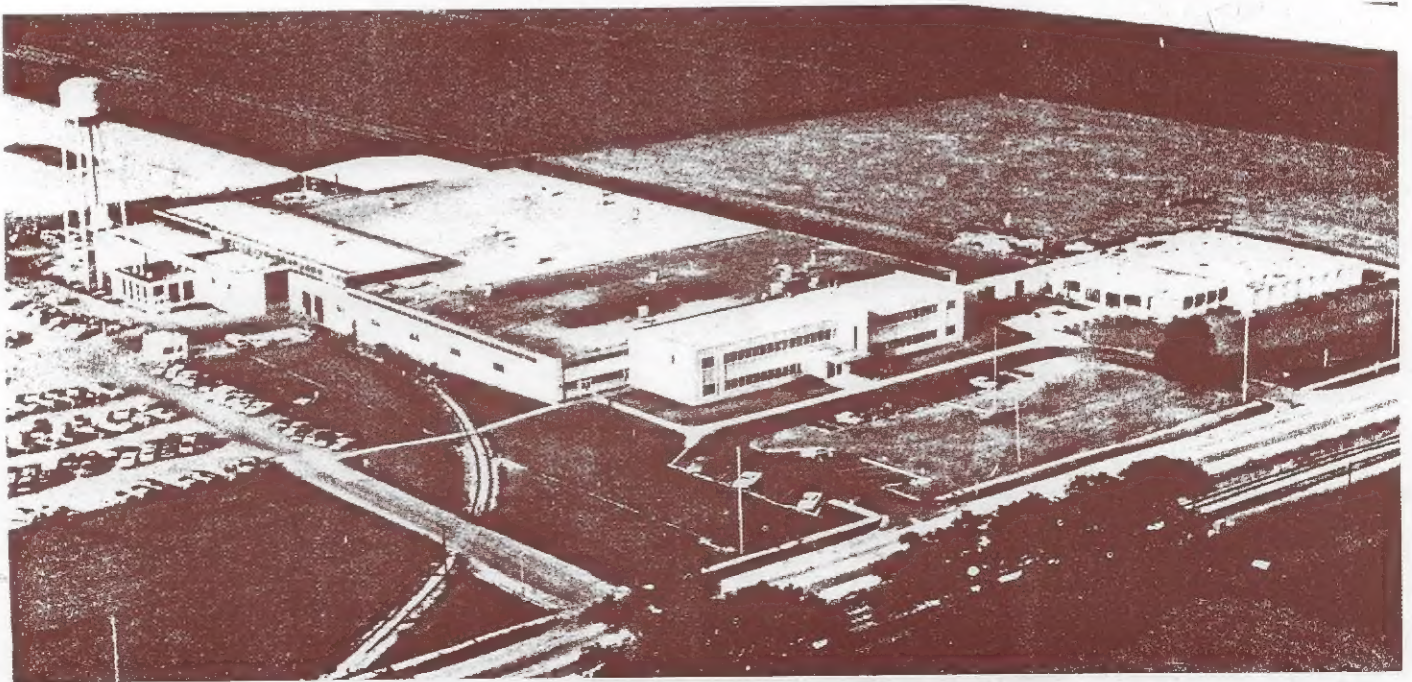
There was a train wreck on the Michigan Central Railroad on Monday, July 15, 1912 about opposite St. Anthony's. There were 150 passengers on the train and six were injured.

Mr. Roe owned an island in the Kalamazoo River. This island was inundated when the Bryce Morrow plant was built. The island was known as Roe's Island.

In 1927 there were 7 seniors in the graduating class.



Consumers Power Morrow Dam, just east of Comstock.



Hydreco was originally established in Cleveland as Hydraulic Equipment Company in 1936 by Hall Kirkham. (The principal owner) Their first customer was the Towmotor Company, a building of industrial trucks, for whom they built

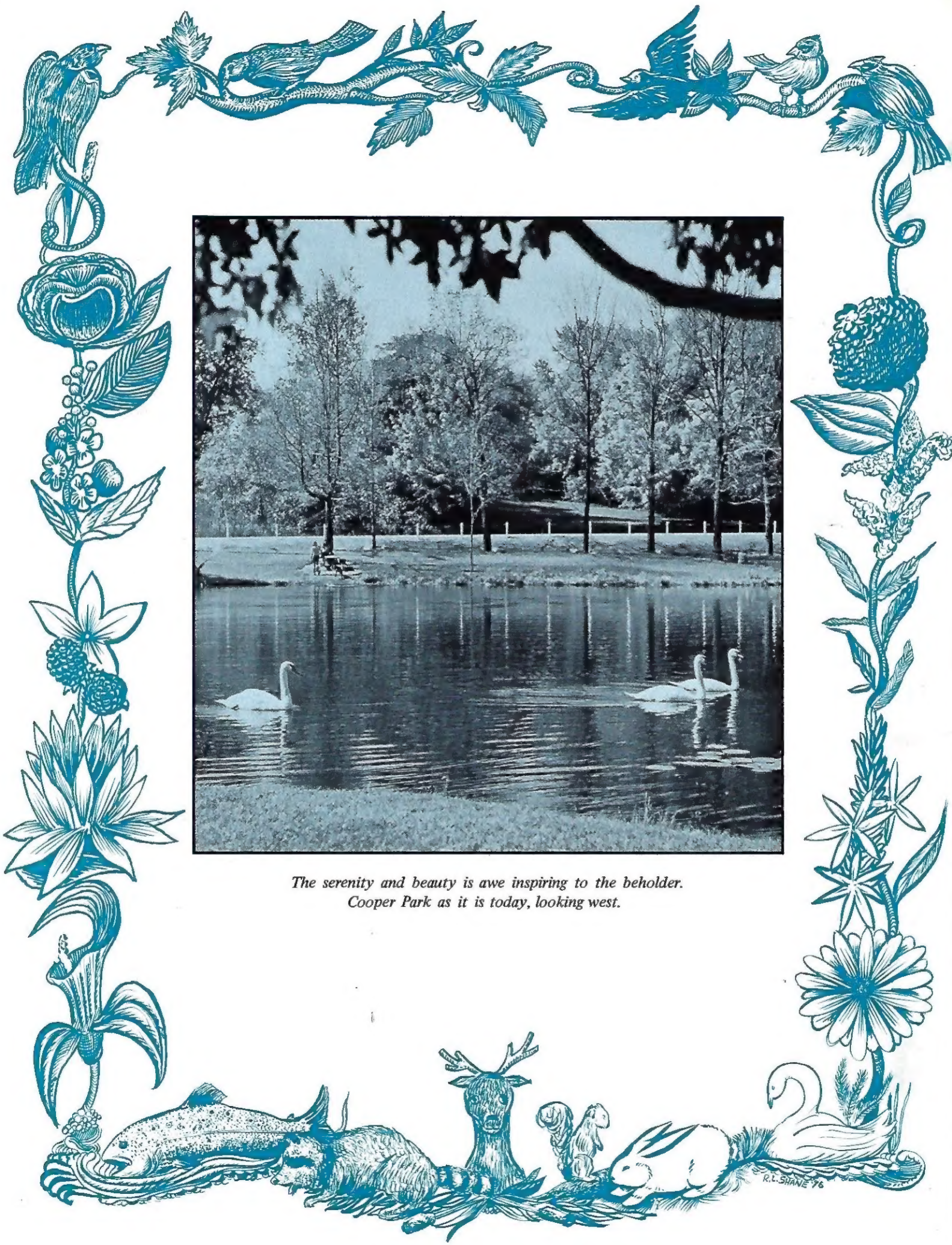
hydraulic cylinders. In September 1967, New York Air Brake Company was merged into General Signal Corporation, and Hydreco became one of 17 operating units of combined companies.

We have, my friend, come to the end of our labors. True we have filled the pages with the facts of our past as given us and as we, too, know them to be. Yet we know our job is not nearly complete, for our accomplishment was so short lived. Doing in a mere eight months what should, perhaps, take many years. So please bear with us our mistakes, the should-be's and short comings, for we are very much aware of the stories and pictures we could or should have included. But with limited time and space, we were powerless to do otherwise. So for those missed, we apologize; for all others, we hope you are pleased.

Coordinating Committee
of the Bi-Centennial Committee



Then and Now, from a quaint, peaceful village setting in the early 1900's to our modern, sophisticated look of progress. Above, a picture taken just after the turn of the century shows the 26th Street Rail Road Crossing. Celery crates (extreme right) await pick up at rail station. And, a more recent view of the same crossing.



*The serenity and beauty is awe inspiring to the beholder.
Cooper Park as it is today, looking west.*